To sit in a simulated living space at Ikea
is to know what sand knows
as it rests inside the oyster.
This is how you might arrange your life
if you were to start from scratch:
a newer, better version of yourself applied
cloth by cloth, beginning with lamplight
from the simulated living room.
The man who lives here has never killed.
There is no American camouflage drying
over the backs of his kitchen chairs,
no battle studies on the coffee table.
He travels without a weapon,
hangs photographs of the Taj Mahal,
the Eiffel Tower above the sofa.
The woman who lives here has no need
for prescriptions or self-help:
her mirror cabinet holds a pump
for lotion and a rose-colored water glass,
her nightstand is stacked with hardcovers
on Swedish architecture. The cat who lives here
has been declawed, the dog rehomed.
There are no parking tickets in the breadbox,
no parakeets shrilling over newspaper
in the decorative cage by the desk.
When you finish your dollar coffee
and exit through the simulated front door,
join other shoppers with chapsticks
in their purses and Kleenex and receipts,
with T-shirts that say Florida Keys 2003
and unopened Nicorette blisters in their pockets, you will wish you could say this place is not enough for you, that you are better off in the harsh light of the parking garage, a light that shows the skin beneath your skin, the color of your past self, pale in places, flushed in others.