AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS

Aluminum oars soundlessly slice
the tepid air and warm
sleek waters of the lake.

A pied-billed grebe swims nearby.
A thousand miles away in the dog-eared
pages of my grandfather’s Bible
St. Paul asks, “Do you not know
your body is a temple?”

Long before Paul, the temple
of the Israelites was pillaged, plundered,
and destroyed. There
God dwelled among the ruins.

What I know for certain is
my arms have grown tired
from rowing.

I know the body of the grebe
is small and brown
with black chin and black ring
around his chicken-like ivory bill,
and the flock to which it belongs
will migrate soon leaving the sick
and maimed behind.

I know it is late in the season
and the mule-deer foraging on shore
finds most woody vegetation gone,

that the mule-deer’s stiff-legged jump startles the grebe
and like a submarine it sinks
below the surface,

that a grebe can remain
submerged longer than most
water fowl. I know it will surface
from the dark warm waters
when the danger has passed.

Pamela S. Wynn, MA
New Brighton, MN