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## Natural History of Childhood

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## Knoeller: Natural History of Childhood

### NATURAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD

Christian Knoeller

To be born on an island carved  
by glaciers in the shape of a fish—  
a flag tattered by wind

where ice came to rest  
as the world began to warm.  
The gravel beneath your feet

will never find its way home.  
Farmers plow a dense crop  
from under acres of sand,

stones that rolled a thousand miles  
remember the route like a tattoo  
misshapen by time.

Children pitch rocks  
at eels in a creek  
beside the ballfield.

By August, only a few pools  
remain, thick with ooze,  
where crawfish

lurk like refugees.  
Even the muskrat's den  
is exposed in midair.

Nothing moves.  
The channel is littered  
with cans and old shoes:

the sad harvest of a young  
fisherman on the edge of town.  
There are arrowheads

beneath the pitcher's mound  
and wild chamomile in left field.  
Sun lingers above a dugout.

Summer days line up  
like furrows after wind  
quits at sunup. Sky

is sweet with honeysuckle  
the hour turtles return  
to their burrows.

One has a date carved  
on its belly. You can trace  
the rings on its shell—

count off years.