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Returning to Año Nuevo

Christian Knoeller

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Knoeller: Returning to Año Nuevo

RETURNING TO AÑO NUEVO
Christian Knoeller

As if it were not enough to have lived on the edge
of land where surf seems to merge
with its own distant reflection

and salt enters your pores with an old
intimacy known to seals returning
to this beach to reenact

their ritual skirmish courtship and
birth—of one substance with the gray
ocean sky and sand even

shore birds nesting in squat cliffs,
and pelicans on flexed wings
gliding, gliding

the same gray as the vacant windows
of an abandoned house across
the bay opening on darkness

structure gutted by fire yet still
standing somehow between dunes,
its pale green roof a perch

for raptors that hover now hunting
above heather beyond the pond,
where we walk among

last blossoms of lupine blazing
among its own bones, dwarf
reeds and beach willow

gone to seed beside the brackish marsh:
enough that breath climbs tidelike
then subsides.