

# **Meditation on the Shore**

*(Ocean City, NJ)*

**Benjamin Goodney**

Get out of your head once  
in a while. Go swimming.  
Bathe in hot July thunder  
showers under flowering dogwoods.

Cross out mistakes firmly, and  
with an air of aspiration.  
Stenograph the murmurs of  
brain-damaged men on the bus.

Repurpose them.  
Do not dwell upon the malformed  
letter 't', the infelicity  
of words, choruses

written down in static.  
Fill out forms with fountain pens,  
transform lines into livestock,  
veins into Venus. Pray

in the painted woods  
on set at the theatre. Weather moods.  
Trust the rhythm of your wrists;  
twist text messages into a caramel

hour. Inspiration—any will do  
if well done. Stake, then, good  
reputation on a cartridge  
of toner, boxes of ink,

signatures of a sculpture  
dead before its sculptor,  
embalmed and beautiful.  
Study lepidopterists,

prepare dispatches to Nabokov.  
Fold them unlit into pale  
envelopes. Post them to the flats  
where you used to live

where your great loves used  
to live before they met  
each other. Join  
bare floors. Embody feedback.

Tell truth to hurt.  
Make a fiction cure-all  
bottled in a white label  
with the staff of Asclepius

pressed carefully atop the seal  
of a corrugated box that was once  
marked *childhood*, borne on a wagon.  
Sit meeting at the tables just like

all the other tables where the people  
who sit at tables at the meetings  
add their pains to a cement mixer,  
tumbling them against one another

until each shines like polished stone.  
Watch the sun set as the rains  
spot that red shirt, think of the devil  
crying at averted light—

curiosity turned away from what is  
lost inside a cluttered head. Charge off  
decision trees to the greengrocer,  
the barber, the knitter of yarn

scarves at the market.  
Extraspect at all times.  
Call friends from the last payphone  
in town, interrupt them by listing

fifteen accidental species of beetle  
caught in the webs of a red back  
pack, by praising the silent  
busy night freeway median: no voices

to be heard. Burn that manuscript,  
watch each sentence smokescreen stars,  
inhale the brain's marvelous control  
of the fingers. Say nothing

to the I, to Merleau-Ponty's projecting  
activity constitutive of self,  
to the faculties of memoir  
and planning too. Drive at dawn

a stranger's four-by-four on blacktop  
to elope with the sea.  
Throw nets from a dinghy  
captained by an old leather wallet

for jellyfish and horseshoe crabs.  
Float, nipples up on swells, as a spring  
tide goes out, until the end  
of a hurricane joins salt water to sky.