

## Mammoth Bones

My mother hands me her cigarette  
while she looks for sentient life in the river rocks,  
musing *I could' ve been a geologist.*

A few of her specimens look like possible transmogrifications of our planet.

And we walk up the river to see  
if we can ever find the beginning.

My brother and I have only one thing in common: silver nail polish peels off  
our nails, each finger a different cave painting.

As we cross, moths with sticky legs fly from the embers of fried joshua trees;  
we live in a force field made up of what' s already gone.

My father practices detachment, so when I see his hands float past my ankles,  
I think he' s succeeded. Though I glimpse once prehensile Roman arms in the  
water try to catch them before they go.

A mammoth comes to take water from the opposite sand bar.  
We' re no longer walking along the extant bank, are we?

I dip my head underwater and still faintly smell smoke.

Then, looking up, my neck bends at the right angle to see feathers

and I' m so relieved to see the birds aren' t flying away.