

faded like handprints the ghosts  
left on our windows at night.

Who could I tell? My own reflection  
in the bathroom mirror

turned its back on me.  
The neighbors who passed me

on rain-gauzed mornings  
thought I stooped under the weight

of a heavy backpack.  
I looked like any other kid

huddled at the bus stop—  
my shoes were tied,

my coat was zippered,  
my lunch was packed.

Though I did stand apart  
under a black dripping tree

where no one could hear me  
muttering under my breath,

repeating all my reasons  
to stay alive, stacking them

in my mind like cans of tuna  
in a storm cellar.