

*Black Hole*

... every system collapses.

—Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, 27 April 1978

The day they photographed the black  
hole, the light passing the event horizon  
before disappearing into nothing-  
ness, we knew then the center of something  
only by its edge, the outline projecting what  
it could of middle ground, the eye burning  
through radio waves onto our screens:  
We had never questioned our mortality  
in ways that mattered: we did not understand  
the foolishness of time until we saw the gaping  
mouth of infinity. You were dying  
in another place in another  
year, and the boundaries of our known  
world collapsed then: everything became  
small: our loop to the clinic, the pharmacy,  
the health food store: vitamins in little cups  
stacked on your nightstand, celery I'd wash  
twice before putting in the blender, feeling  
the base of each stalk for the line of dirt

I knew I'd find there. Above me — around  
me — matter folded in on itself in absolute  
darkness. I don't know why we assumed  
that we could live uninterrupted, unaffected;  
if light itself is not guaranteed, nothing  
is guaranteed. I made your bed, I moved  
your cane, my thoughts not of death  
but of aftermath, a question for science  
at its core: in the space of absence, what  
abides? If the beam of the camera  
can tip over the edge, passing without  
fanfare into what we cannot see, how can  
we expect to carry on our lives—shopping  
for groceries, pulling dandelions from flower  
beds, washing sheets on Wednesdays—  
while the afternoon sun passes over  
your sleeping form on the couch in the front  
study for now, knowing you'll be  
gone with the same small tug: every flower  
and leaf bending toward a center  
that I cannot see.