The High Branch

to a childhood friend

Of course I believed you when you said that you could hang longer from the high branch of the live oak that divided the field, marking that place as certainly as a fissure—the roots, your father told us, as long as a dozen grown men. Still, we did what we had to do, toed again footholds deepened by this habit, grasped limbs as known to us as our bodies, changeless in an unremitting season. I knew even then that it was fear that kept us, sealed our hands to the perpetual bark so that we dangled, slim, wingless bats, from that height. That the fall was only the first of many rendings, a pain so sharp I could almost teach myself to want it.