

Patricia Robertson

The Death of Ice

1

Sikuliaq. Sarri. Tuvaq.
So the Inupiat said when it lived.
They carved it, they slept in it, dreamed
of an afterworld, cold as a frostbitten cheek.
They killed on its floes.
Young ice. Pack ice. Landlocked ice.
Its death was foretold in their legends.
Overhead the aurora, singing through space.

2

It was blue, we tell them.
It spoke.
It was many feet thick or shattered like glass.
Candle ice. Frazil ice. Pancake ice.
It turned ponds into mirrors.
We wore blades on our feet, we flew,
we danced. The water held us.
A commonplace miracle.

3

Erratics on the flat veldt, they melt
in the noonday sun. Among them
pronghorns and springbok, casting shadows,
thorn bush and fever tree.
The children laugh at the stories.
Ice fog. Icicles. What marvellous lies!
We will place them, the last ones,
in deep cold in museums:
Si u aq. S ri. Tu .