

Seven Ways of Looking at the USS Arizona

by Steven Duncan

Perhaps the truth depends on a walk around the lake.

—WALLACE STEVENS

I. Oil lies neatly
over bottomless water
like a welcome mat.

I wonder if
I should take off
my shoes.

II. The oil does not mix
with water.

War and peace
continue to be
a vinaigrette.

III. One thousand men
are buried below
deck, below ocean

below air.

Water flows in
and out, driving
oil upward.

It makes sense now
why it's called a wake.

- IV. The surface gathers
light from the sun,

returns it prism.

This rainbow
a sign from God

the flood is over.

- V. Rust and barnacle,
there is only reef now.

The bay
has taken the ship.

I turn away
for thinking the phrase
swim with the fishes.

No one is swimming—
it is far too still.

- VI. A veteran guide
tells of five
living survivors.

There is folklore
fuel will seep, so long
as one remains alive.

The oil seems
to drift slower,
more phantom.

The guide is missing a leg.

VII. The tired monument
shut down last week.

Concerns over
structural integrity.

I visited
just in the nick—imagine

what could have been
with slightly different
timing.