When Squash Plants Pop Up

out of the dark,
each leaf’s a baby turtle swimming,
pulsing membrane the clear water
holds with the others.

Wary of birds
or are they?

Oblivious I think in their being thrilled
by being at all!

Numbers are what save them as they’re killed.
I think how it was for Odysseus,
no companions, water all around

his raft.

In Bosnia—not that far
from where the ancient Greeks sailed on the Adriatic

—or,

in Serbo-Croatian and Slovene, Jadran—
there are gravestones shaped like Egyptian obelisks with knobs at the tops,

some like ours but thinner,

some tipping
a little bit over, the stone dark.

Seeing them snapped me to another—such a different!—world

though I was
only driving through for like a half-hour.
In the Trenches of the Carso

Ungaretti thought about home, Alexandria, where he grew up.

Although he was Italian Egypt formed him.

Under the bombs in Italy years later he heard Bedouins chanting, felt the Sahara’s breadth, the thrill of getting lost.

Why did it feel like home for me? The smell of wood smoke as I walked off the plane in Cairo,

then, a few days later, Aswan and the river—
leaf piles burning in our backyard

in north Florida,
or when my father forgot to open the flue,

smoke filling the house,

his gaff-rig boat
cutting against the current

of the St. John’s River

when he was ten
in his mind

always as he

walked around the house singing,
his boat racing across the water

in his thinking.

Like the brightly painted ones
in Aswan, their sails curved

as they swerved past

enormous rocks
on the Nile he never saw:
a color doesn’t last—

oh homeland each age of yours
wakes up in my blood.
I Almost Died

then moved.
I’ve done it before.

I like where I am now

in the mountains
but I know I’ll go.

I feel

off,
studying

go up through the limestone.

I moved away
so long ago,
I fled.

Still tied to the place,
I’m like the squiggly creeks

looping through the land,

feel it when I cross
the Georgia line.