

## Conversion

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*A change in an employee's status or tenure from one category of employment to another, such as from part-time to full-time or from noncareer to career.*

—United States Postal Service, “Glossary of Postal Terms”

The cell divides and a hundred million years later, it's  
a bull shark or Sophocles. Not sure which; not sure  
how these things work. Point is:  
things change, evolve, move forward.

You get the job, get promoted, get fired. Lead  
becomes gold, then one day it doesn't.  
The sun orbits the earth, then one day it doesn't.  
The whale gets legs, gets bored with land, goes back

to the ocean, the legs are now a metaphor. Nothing certain,  
nothing written in stone that can't be unwritten by the  
hammer. The world keeps trying to end itself because it  
wants to end, then one day it doesn't.

You get homesick. Get heartburn. Get a strange yearning to  
pray when looking at photographs or cellphone towers. You  
have a hard time adjusting to your new status, station, or  
impending fate. You believed one thing,

now you believe something else. The earth has ice caps, then  
one day it doesn't. Everything: converted  
to a newer thing. Meanwhile: old gods become lesser gods,  
become priests leaving offerings at someone else's altar.

The god of war grows up to sell pocketknives at a pawn shop. The  
goddess of carrots peddles sinus medications.  
The messenger god now brings your mail—  
and there he is, right on schedule, one house to the next.

This always stuns me: the way an envelope arrives; how we still  
reach toward one another, how this correspondence endures:  
one figure approaches your door with a satchel full of sand,  
pigeon feathers, sorrows, and names.

