

Reflecting on the Photo of My Parents Getting off the Plane in Guam, 1972

In the background: oil tankers, an orange
cargo vessel, the receiving factory
just beyond the twist of my mother's hair.

Countries have fallen, and they have flowers
on their heads, a camera looped around
my father's arm. Her smile will catch

you first. My father is just saying
something funny, eyes blinking, teeth showing
as he opens his mouth to laugh. She, in blue,

is leaning ever so slightly into him,
halfway around the world to work as the ocean
washes up boat after boat of refugees.

You wouldn't know it from the rise of her neck,
her lips parted slightly, her dark eyes following
the sound of low water. On this island

the grass yellows, and the heat is so new,
so strange, they will never understand
the thickness of the air. What we can't see:

her crying the first six months, black-haired
orphans, dark bottles of beer, rolls of confiscated film.
This picture—the only love story I know.