

This

for H.S.

In the way your poem
with a lake in it
is not about the lake, mine
with a dog and the broken
heart is not about a dog
or saving face. Your ibis as pearls
in their nests is no more
about the sway of banyan trees
than it is about lovers and brothers
or fathers living among
the cedars
and scat in my poems, nor
those pyres by the tracks
waiting for a match, all
queerly remembered, queer
as teaching ourselves
not to drown, or of clouds
that don't move, what a sea hawk
carries in her talons,
and the long dirt road,
and the navel of the moon?
All poems about storms at sea,
combined, are not about
the earth's proclivities, but
deciding what spins.
Everything is about
gravity, the grave
pulling
for us. Each day
it starts with a bark
calling our name.

Caper

When I am an eraser I can do
anything. Mistakes may be made
with impunity. I write
as though paper will never be
priceless, it crumples
and springs back. The invention
of the pencil protects me
from permanency and
practicality. Ideas are not
commitments. This jaw line
may be drawn smooth, not
cracked, to receive a caress.
I draw shade and under it
a neck, shoulders. I dream
this to be me, that dreams
matter. If I can be my dream,
and live it too, so can you.

The Motorist

"Life is a movie. Death is a photograph."

SUSAN SONTAG

A picture of a car and its driver
competes poorly
with the road, the cliff, the sea

moving,
in real time. Between the driver
and her heap,

her free arm open,
her hand is catching and letting go
atoms and atoms of that

which shall remain
nameless
so long as she knows

she is free not to be
where she's expected to go.

Drive

My tiny car's tiny engine
groans and hums
the way my mother hummed

a little ditty when
nervous,
the way I do

mulling over something hard
letting my chest
send a message

to my mouth, my mouth
forming a kind of growl
while all along

staying shut. I enter
the on-ramp to the freeway
heading home

from a family visit,
the pedal to the floor,
I pump my chin

toward the dashboard
thinking I'm helping.
I think I hear

my brother's taunt:

What is it

with women

and cars? We are old,

old enough,

to equate mobility

with independence.

Real wheels

take me out of state,

escaping the trap

I thought was

the small town. For this

I left the ocean

I left the trees

I left Eel Pond with seabirds

standing on spring ice,

summer surfboards lined up

on the berm

between the sea grass

and the sea.

I left my family of origin,

my Lucky buried in the back-

yard, dog heaven,

now home to a chalet

built by strangers,
the chicken coop,
the barn, gone. When

driving I think of love
as a road trip, the soaring,
the breakdown, jump-

starts, the brand new,
and old reliable.
I'm no mechanic

though I once knew
how to change a fan belt
sheared to a thread.

Here the air is fresh.
The new mutt
who travels with me

leaves her nose prints
on the passenger windows
the way my old dog did,

leaving a spot
just clear enough
to drive through.

Run

I am walking &
talking at first
then humming
picking up the pace

my stride following
the singing which
begins as a
strum

until a clicking
reminds me that fuel
which is matter
which is mind

which is idea
is not endless
and only as fertile
as the working

brain
allows—
the brain we take
for granted

which could fail
at any time.
And that
clicking?

I begin
to walk faster
unused to
the acceleration

of unknowing
how to keep up
with losing
a fading of something

that is not firm
graspable
watching it go
a voice which is

now
singing
as if voice were light
and the sun is

that shot
in the dark
that cries
run.

Self-Portrait: Between the Car and the Sea

I think I'll stay blonde
a while longer. Downshifting
for the view, today,

the engine strains
in first gear the way
on foot my body

climbing the last few steps
does. You'd hear it, too,
if the heart

had a literal voice. Silently
pulling for itself,
the will wants the body to

give it what it wants.
How long will these parts last?
I put off minding the flags

lifting their faces. I watch sea lice flit
from shell to sand to beach
eased by transition lenses.

Inventory

This is the blade that wipes
the glass that clears the rain/
snow/leaves that

cuts the chemical
mix that cuts the salt
mud from the road that clouds

the curved surface
conceived to bend.
And stays that way

to let the wind
glide over it.
All of this and none of this

is metaphor for what
is seen through,
the direct

experience of which
is delayed just enough
to allow

eyed, eared,
nosed, lipped—
expression,

something
the body shows
but not as clear

as the head.