

this woman

i

her voice
 egg blue spiking turquoise in moments
 the way a march dusk flares, conscious
 toward whatever might come; the wrappings
 of a night not yet known to anyone
 dwelling in me tender all the next day.

now my walking under such a sky, weeping,
 and without an answer for her, but want
 of the heart-knot to loosen
 where voices reach and cast my days
 from a far singing place beyond sense, and want

to go on, recalling how thoughts
 seemed to gather in her hands, flight
 at her wrists, this verb happening
 in the air between us, all through
 our long conversation.

ii

to say a woman shunted
 up to a northern prison she is

sparrow light at my side hawk
 hard sure her eyes of refusal

she will not sign her name

though they threaten again
 again threaten

five hours we visit she hovers
 light light only touched down

to say this woman

her chin set all afternoon
 she mortal, alert, without surrender she

when they take her
 two weeks early high scream

on the morning telephone

to say this woman her self
 still holding

still
 there

iii

a woman the stride of a whole day with her
 loose-limbed now

easy tonight

her breath
 blood the flesh current
 bass sweet she
 without a flinch a clutch of
 muscle she is
 soft salt floes russet
 tempo she is flaring
 grace from the bowl of her hips
 frank
 red
 speech she
 is
 this body for herself

shauna paull