

Postcard from Bodega Bay, 1963

Here the air is hardly ever still: shrieks, then trills.
Leaves swallowed by shadow and song. Come summer,
it's said the gulls will outnumber the locals, their bodies roosting
inside the steeple at St. Theresa's, legs like clothespins clinging
to the schoolhouse eaves. You wouldn't recognize me,
how welcome I am, more homing than home. When sparrows
ribbon between houses, their cries remind me why

I left. Why in the boughs of your mouth a name
other than mine now perches. Oh, this sky! How it hovers,
then dips! Empty as memory, then teeming with wing-beat
and talon. Don't bother with apologies. Forgiveness
is the sound of a screen door flapping behind me,
the hard knob nesting in my throat. As you sift
through the ash of eleven years, some aches

I know you won't consider: which letter burned
quicker than the others, where the wind draped
each photo's scorched and oily plume. Sometimes I think
of how swift the first corner took, how often love
is numb beneath the mantle of longing and truth.
Before you, I never knew beauty, its quills, its quiver,
the dark calligraphy unfurling at my back.