

# PEA SOUP II

Erik Brockbank

Driving north through Central Valley  
in the late summer heat  
hardly a wind can breathe.

Once, when I was so filled with heartache  
I rarely opened my mouth for fear  
the last bird in me would flit and flicker out  
I packed my car and left San Diego for the bay.

In the arid miles from the grapevine to Gilroy  
I felt most at home in my sorrow:  
something about that vast, flat plain  
tendered by fruit trees and sunbaked pasture,  
or the way the sky filled its place  
made no concessions despite its emptiness.

I understood too what sort of electricity  
crackles in those tall transmission towers  
bow-legged cowboys all out of secrets  
visible down to their bones.

Every time I drive through that shimmering fever  
I find the same melancholy, waiting  
like a fruit stand by the road.

I think I've lived many lives by now  
a feeling as I pass the trees  
in their fencepost rows  
leaves lush with striving  
and all their history  
in the soil below.