

## Self Portrait in a Rental Kitchen

1.

Rowed through five days of rain, my mind a spin-dial  
ratcheted click by click shut.

The boats in my mind  
clocking east, a muckle of black-backed gulls

electrolytically lit, bunting the wind, an iridescence  
that suggests it might be

possible to climb my skull's seaside  
cliff on cramponed feet into these hand-knit minutes.

2.

But time shape-shifts like a dune & what is buried  
resurfaces: eavesdropped

notes of two-fingered  
chopsticks on a toy piano, metal jacks flung

like sleep-away-camp stars, a white furred  
terrier stuffed with an  
approachable happiness,  
hailed everywhere by a child who always & almost

only played by herself—misfit,  
even after I fit in, after  
transmigrating to California  
at thirteen, a freed pilgrim. Even after crossing

the equator & crossing back, my fixed abode an  
isolation tank, a basement  
drenched with a mother's  
tears, her hand-knit suffering calling.

3.

Even now, long after her passing, an alarm's fluorescent  
beep jacks off—erratic—staccato—incessant—insistent,

I'm still

wired-in, the present moment short-

circuiting, corkscrewing

like the pitch pine out here, each of the cone's scales  
with its barb curved inward as

a toe nail, habitual

as loneliness.