

SUSAN TICHY

A Ghost

of rock, deceptively whole
as a wave is whole

at the moment
of its breaking

'dark with an excess of light'
above the trees

stopped in the meadow
'fingering the white quartz

which seamed the granite boulders'
an accurate guide

to conduct among the snows
ravens drift

across the ridge-top dog
or coyote barks in the trees

and 'properly used
danger can have an important meaning'

clear as a stone
on paper 'the pen

should walk slowly
over the ground'

—a task too easily mastered
at altitude

this dead bristlecone, far ridge
quarreling across my line of sight

their 'dark tint passing tenderly'
to boot-on-rock, to stonecrop

a noise half brook, half silence
in the scree flights of fish

in the limestone, pace
of thought from steep

to steep a pipit
flies straight up with its wings still, held

by wind
'and with reference to breathing

I do not say what
it is for'

backwards as forwards
long slopes of debris

'rest your hand on a book
so to hold the pen long'

'dressing the action in gallant attire'
(one hat, searched for

on the second day)
the grieving bring a photograph

'made chocolate sherbet
in the summer snow'

not *summer* snow but *summit* snow
not *summit snow* but *summit*

—it's a verb
trail worn into the white rock

'one had to cross an expanse of sea'
spatter of rain and a gull feather

caught in my jacket zipper
it's far from home and I

surveying distances
'as if they were your whole estate'

say 'jumped from the top of a cattle car
with his clarinet under his arm'

say 'swam into tarns
to fetch out water lilies'

and there, 'just
where the curve of the petal turns to light'

say 'bloom of the scarlet dye
on shining linen' strata

of 'utterly harsh and horrible colour'
strata of 'delicate pen lines' mere

requiring in crossed branches
bound at the root

a wind is captured, illustrated
by 'syllable of a stammerer'

a stumbler stumbling
up hill from the trail

a stone in the bristlecone
—someone has visited—

'guarding the frontier
of heaven and earth'

elk scat here
in the aplily ants

keep rearranging
the ashes

improbable slip
masquerading

as possible granite
drifting across basalt

(my footprints drying behind me)
rolling on landwave

rock-drunk
sprawled where a siskin

talks in the undertow
'to pause within a hair's breadth

of any appointed mark'
and see

nothing a kestrel

hangs where east meets west
the ridge

in both directions
concealing force

and 'no series
without a snap somewhere'