

## The Pines

The pines are dark, with a bleed of sea mist coming through  
the brush-worked texture of the air  
to settle over the headland, where plaques have been  
wired to a fence –  
    memorials to those  
        who came to the end of themselves  
and closer to the sea, in a low cloister  
between ti-trees and flowering acacia  
a woman and her children are burying a dog -  
one holds a spade while others lower things  
a leash, a bowl, into the ground  
    and some nights I hear the calls  
        of the common brown frogs  
dying out in timed, communal distribution  
under the breaking velvet heads of bulrushes  
and while I don't always look for wonder  
in what I see, as I know it's often best to walk  
to let that line of cloud be cloud  
not the memory of what I saw in Naples -  
Christ under a veil of Carrera marble - I understand  
that observation can be just another word  
for full immersion, or for skimming the tight skin  
of a thought, that it's transformative, or passive  
and when I try to choose between  
    taking the air and taking what I need  
        to use for later, for working the rhythms  
of breath and blood flow into verse, I mostly fail  
in my resolve to leave a scene alone  
    knowing what a glance takes in  
        will be changing already as I think of it  
the way coastal air unspools  
from the needled stem of a pine, at dusk  
and how offshore wind makes a tearing sound  
along the crests of breakers, yet  
    when observation becomes obsessive  
        it can overburden the senses and lead  
to a depression in the well-spring of a thought or action  
so mostly I walk, noticing  
how the eye-patch on a male fig bird  
turns a deeper shade of red when he faces the sun  
or simply that a bird has my attention  
and I'll wait to see what happens next, which might involve  
moving on, or ignoring an arrangement  
I have made with myself  
    by which I mean I'll put aside concern  
        and caution, take my time, and learn.