

Sage Junction

We drive the two-lane highway
after a downpour, black storm moving easterly,
sun slanting into whole spectrums of gray
edged sterling in light through rain.
The downhill road toward Idaho glints
like a long trout, and from Wyoming
the highway steams faintly where a semi,
streak of silver, speeds through
with its shaft of wind.

I open windows to the tremble and breathe
deeply: the durable gears of memory lean
with my father's truck taking the curve;
then the downshift to winter peril the school year
a whole family died on this route
linking rival basketball teams.
We gather speed in the wet desert northward,
fragrances arcing through time:
I leave for school and Grandmother
hands me bread fried in butter,
sprinkled with sugar . . . in a scent of sage
white curtains of her kitchen
rise like a loaf.

—Dixie Partridge