

KATHERINE SMITH

Self-Help

Leah watches clouds that arch, scatter,
like her family's cats fleeing the sound
of the vacuum cleaner's roar. The plane
carries her from Washington, away from
the early morning quarrel with her
thirteen year old daughter who wouldn't
dress for school. A distance like self-help
books that teach Leah how to breathe
on the plane so her ribs won't ache.
Her hands ruffle the pages on her lap
which describe her life quietly
as she might describe an ocean
moving beneath the wingspan of the plane.
But Leah can't bear reading
just now, ink regular as waves
of nausea. Not that she doesn't want
to be soothed. It's just that the turquoise
green and gold-flecked waves
of the Atlantic flutter beneath
the plane's low flying shadow like
an immense petal, and the world
unfurls like a spring too real
for frost that would heal beauty.