

BRENDAN GALVIN

A Woman at Lake Pontchartrain Park

Somehow the sky this morning
got under a far shrimper and lifted it
off the water, nets and hull, and turned
the north shore to floating blue islands.

Hillingar Effect: the cloudless air
stills and stabilizes over a cooler surface
and curves light to a lens that elevates
distant images above the horizon,

a wonder lost on this woman who's sitting
among motley vans and the parti-colored cars
of those who seem to be living on the road.

All day behind the Volvo's wheel, facing
the levee that keeps the lake from a suburb,
she has watched as if someone
with the directions might walk over its ridge.

Something has ended for her. She looks
crammed in with the plaid suitcases
and stuffed garbage bags. Now at her back
a race is in progress, an afternoon

of bright spinnakers behind the gray slick
of trouble on her face: miles out on the lake,
they may only remind her of empty
detergent bottles bobbing on the waves.

And these palm trees, the fish crows and pelicans?
This black flock of jumpy, water-walking coots
with their white beaks — even those glossy
ibises hunting bayou sloughs on the road here

must be lost on her. Fed up or thrown out,
she has gotten only this far from the rupture
of routine. Here where no being with wings
or suspension of gravity
can touch her isolation clear as starlight.