Ferry Ride and Taking Leave of Friends

Carolyne Wright
FERRY RIDE
(Puget Sound, Washington)

The great boat glides by,
a red kite on an unseen wire
wavering behind it like an afterthought.
We move between worlds: the water
a blue field ferries plow,
sheened flat enough by sun
to walk on; the land, dark
with hemlocks wrapped in their boughs
like monks in winter. Our thoughts
are full of semicolons, ride
invisible wires before words flag out
at their ends like kite tails.
Our hearts, locked in our bodies
like two lamps in a footlocker.
We stare hard at the darkening water,
the gulls’ throats as they wheel and sob,
and when we dare, each other.
As far into the night as the engine,
boat’s heart, beats below deck,
we glide toward each other—waves
that cross—and leave our echoes,
the thrum and clangor of bells
under the water. We lock
in the dark between moons,
beat our hearts from hiding;
then kiss, turn our respective cheeks,
and give ourselves to every moment
that we sleep: our lives, in dream,
two rows of lights winking
off a long pier toward the sea.
TAKING LEAVE OF FRIENDS
(Lake Union Dock, Seattle)

A spot picked at damp random
to break through: the line of docks
spattered with creosote, workmen
hosing down a seaplane on the fritz,
silence in the beam-strewn yards
between warehouses. How will we get out
of this one? you ask the red ant
topped from a rusted cable to your thigh.
Migrations are the mainstay: a gaggle
of honkers lined up on the shore,
calls hollow with tundra, thawed ice
booming under all-night sun.
Long sad distances unravel
from their bandaged throats.
Strange currents catch the skirts
of your thoughts on the updraft.
You forget time here, forget rhyme, reasons
for coming, half your name. Who could ask
where you're going, who would you change
your life for, whether you'd put a bookmark
in your heart and rise and follow?
Who would know how true you are, no matter
what the year, no matter what the rip tides
of your blood washed in? Clouds
piling up on the horizon show you
who your friends are, love
the outbound bus you climb aboard,
your strongest word goodbye.