

Women

I don't know what women want, Eileen.
Maybe love. Maybe the tops of alpine
trees, light blue and shivering
under a mad snowfall.

The woman sitting next to me
on this plane is reading a hardback
romance novel. On the cover,

a girl with flowing black hair
is dressed in a long red cape
and the red cape is flowing too
in the blue, blue wind.

I get scared to fly through air.
I guess I fear a lot of things.

When women hate me I recoil
like ugliness itself and all I've ever
wanted is some motherly presence
to make tea for me with steam flowing
out of the top of the ceramic mug to say
everything will be okay.

I lean over and look at her book.
The first line in chapter one
says the book takes place
in California in 1850.

She notices the intrusion, says "It's a book
about self-love. The main character grew up

in a rough environment and was
treated like a sex slave
and then became a prostitute.”

I pour a glass of red wine
and this violent atmosphere is going
to break my heart open today
like a piece of luggage—out spills

the history of my life like lots
of dresses, books, lotions,
leggings electric blue makeup.

I relate to Celan’s poetry.
that terrible, sad search for a mom—
screwed up and convoluted like
a knot in the throat of bruised trees.