

CAFÉ WOMAN

She stands in line,
gazing beyond me—
as if seeing
the future somehow.

Such loneliness,
standing tall and proud.
A long leather boot
tapping, her crossed arms

unfolding. A hand brushes back
auburn curls of hair
tinged with gray.
Chin upthrust

but trembling...
Her eyes moist
as if remembering
better times...

Café days hot with intrigue;
romance swirling through the air...
The pain of awe,
even, at the way two lives

once could dovetail
so perfectly...
In her eyes
some such past

shines, so clearly to me,
that I want to say
Yes,
I too know

how the little things
once so simple,
like standing in this cafe line,
have somehow grown fraught

with such difficulty.
The puzzling
of our wills now much
stranger, as too many pieces

seem amiss...
With calm I sit
waiting for her tearing eyes
to meet mine...

But she sidles
to the counter, the moment
passes
and I'm left

with my own vague
fragments...Old friends
and lovers whispering
me further along...

[Written originally in Fall, 1989, in quaint little Petaluma
(Sonoma County), setting as well for *Who Does He Think He
Is, Anyway?*] Thomas Francis Noonan