

MY MOTHER, GETTING DRESSED

It was afternoon before she could manage
pants or shoes; we'd find her teasing her hair

in front of a hand-held mirror, sculpting
with hairspray, a comb; she used a pencil

to etch darkness above her eyes. On a wall,
beside the stairs, was a self-portrait

she'd painted in college: green dress,
face turned to watch me, climbing.

It was hard to get dressed,
or she didn't want to, so she stayed

in her bedroom where
the stock market's gains and losses

slid across a noisy TV screen,
and the dogs, who do not wear clothes,

came to join her: laid down on her pillows,
licking their fur.