Against the Reification of Isadora Duncan

If you obscure nothing, there is no dark to remember.
—Francis Ponge

Where did you get your tragic expression?

Ophelia, Narcissus, blade of grass in my mouth, the dirt’s
push & pulse, the way it moves through my hips

What is your music?

Things as they are crashing then burned

Gooseneck, red-ribboned you, what of apparitions?

Alone in the garden, I was passed right through. I was made a
caryatid. I was made a flue

And did you dance for her?

She placed a motor in my stomach. When she handed me the
sword and the cape, she also made me the bull

A muse?

She made me her salt lick. It was always about to rain when
she came

When you left for Europe on the cattle-boat, did you dance for the animals?

Their tongues held the beat of the ocean. Their hooves knew
no plan

Under starvation, did your feet turn cold?

Not as cold as the winter Seine

When your children went down in it?

When it swallowed them whole. When it spat up only a
tin cup. When it stopped reflecting the bridges, the
Belle Époque buildings, the barge
And the nurse?

And the nurse. And the children. And the car

What of fire and brimstone? What of grief?

I'll teach you how to hide it under a tunic, how to make the windpipe a pulley, dredging up the ocean in your chest. Never make it a concrete thing to form to a tune

Will you tie up your hair?

Not for all the butter in Paris. Not for the danse macabre in my knees

Will you put on your shoes?

Not for stone. Not for glass. Not for you