

I Watched a Snake · *Jorie Graham*

hard at work in the dry grass
behind the house,
catching flies. It kept on
disappearing.
And though I know this has
something to do

with lust, today it seemed
to have to do
with work. It took it almost half
an hour to thread
roughly ten feet of lawn,
so slow

between the blades you couldn't see
it move. I'd watch
its path of body in the grass go
suddenly invisible
only to reappear a little
further on,

black knothed up, eyes on
a butterfly.
This must be perfect progress where
movement appears
to be a vanishing, a mending
of the visible

by the invisible—just as we
stitch the earth,
it seems to me, each time
we die, going
back under, coming back up . . .
It is the simplest

stitch, this going where we must go
leaving a not
unpretty pattern by default. But going
out of hunger
for small things—flies, words—going
because one's body

goes. And in this disconcerting creature
a tiny hunger,
one that won't even press
the dandelions down,
retrieves the necessary blue-
black dragonfly

that has just landed on a pod . . .
all this to say
I'm not afraid of them
today, or anymore
I think. We are not, were not, ever
wrong. Desire

is the honest work of the body,
its engine, its wind.
It too must have its sails—wings
in this tiny mouth, valves
in the human heart, meanings like sailboats
setting out

over the mind. Passion is work
that retrieves us,
lost stitches. It makes a pattern of us,
it fastens us
to sturdier stuff
no doubt. . . .