

## Nymph

I learned to

                  speak in a cool summer afternoon  
green branches dipping into the river,  
a cloud of headlights shifting over my eyelids  
his tongue twisting and diving past my own  
like a  
                  dog lapping for sustenance.  
A kiss without touches, hands curled,  
tensed in the pit of my stomach

I learned to

                  dance to a Spaniard's tune  
red hair soft as a kitten's, his body lithe  
and lean and hungry, desperately hungry, his  
movement soft quick current, hard and firm  
and  
                  guilty. I watched his face  
I watched his face I watched his undripping  
empty eyes burn without excitement or joy

I learned to

                  keen in dead men's arms  
suckling from a cold hard breast and milkless  
thunder, forever hot in starvation, hungry for  
water in silence and noise of 10, 9, 8,  
7,  
                  6. Alone with unutterable thoughts  
memories of bones shaking, men quaking, body  
incessantly yearning for lips not my own  
  
to devour

## How Tree Bark Must Feel

Like styrofoam, but softer and harder:  
rivulets in the cracks and knots in the scenery,  
canyons where the rain fell  
and water carved.

This must be how tree bark must feel  
to wandering hands, fingerpads pressing down  
the hard grooves and flaking edges.

Palms itchy.

Small hands unwrap the bark from the  
bare flesh beneath, looking for presents,  
finding a hard bone over a soft heart.

They avoid the thick vines leached  
on the east side, the moss-softened  
north, and let the pressure of their pads  
follow the rivulets home.

## Syncophany: White

To die, my parka would make a coffin for me:  
mittens at my side, grey night touching everything  
but my lips—blue as the morning sky and clear  
white cheeks, dips of cold white cream with burned reds  
and purple tips. a cold mascara lit around the cracks  
the trees cast on my four-foot chalked-up frame.

Then morning paint with yellow tainted flurries  
and it would be silent, my five-point body stuck between  
the swing set and the blue-padded ten foot trampoline.  
Silence so alarming. No such thing as watching the sun  
rise or nature break its final pact with God. Last thing  
to see would be a night's stippled specters of white.

If only the white could crunch beneath my fingers,  
if I could hear it pack between my frozen toes,  
but I see it sift unharmed through open hands:  
first snowfall, inexplicable, dark as the eyes  
that watch it crawl, the lids that burn its hexagonal  
image in my skull. I want to hear it crack

the way that icicles fall at the separation between  
branch and cardinal, ungrounded and replaceable.  
Rainbow mirrors split in a shattering clack  
of ice and hardened gutter flow. The cardinal  
a red speck against a cerulean sky

eternally remembered for flight. Does a cardinal  
even have a call? I'll walk on top of ice forever  
an inch thick, frosted over. I'll step around thrones  
made of buckets of water thrown over forts  
before dinner, and caves made of five foot snowballs,  
faint with memories and mustard pine leaves.

I want to hear the snow crack and nature to crack  
with it, to break all order and silence. I want  
to be the red before the breaking of the birch,  
its eaves too heavy for the burdens it collects.  
I want to hear the universe split like thunder and the  
world to watch, wondering what happened to white.