

Orpheus Plays the Bronx

When I was ten (*no, younger than that*), my mother tried to kill herself (*without the facts there can't be faith*). One death or another every day, Tanqueray bottles halo the bed and she won't wake up all weekend. In the myth book's color illustration, the poet turns around inside the mouth of hell to look at her losing him (*because it's not her fault they had to meet there*): so he can keep her somewhere safe, save her place till she comes back. Some say she stepped on an asp, a handful of pills littered the floor with their blues, their red and yellow music. Al Green was on the radio. (*You were at school, who's ever even seen an asp?*) It bruised her heel purple and black. So death could get some color to fill out his skin, another bony white boy jealous of her laugh too loud, her *That's my song* when Barry White comes on. He's just got to steal it, he can't resist a bad pun, never never gonna give her up, or back. The pictures don't prove anything, but one thing I remember about the myth's still true: the man can't live if she does. She survived to die for good.

Persephone's Celestial Sphere

For Catherine Imbriglio

Moonlight pools in her hollow bones,
quicksilver slowed to lead, liquid mercury's
indolent poison loitering in the marrow,
cooling, collecting there. It silts her blue blood
viscous, clotted, thickening
to immobility. "I think I was a daughter
once. Some flowers
stained my hands I can't recall." Night
tarnishes her breath to pewter, lead
alloyed: darkening, and flaking off in air.



She shades her eyes against glass morning's
tangled branches, wind plays drying leaves
with no sound, equivocating between shape
and shapelessness. "We speak in shadows here,"
but no one spoke. She knows his voice
by now, his hand pretending to be a cloud
passing between her sight and sun. Eclipse
becomes his proper name, but she won't call him that.



The yellowed light begins to fray, disintegrating
distance, discontent (the lower the observer, the higher
and more intimate her visible
horizon). A shift toward orange skims across,
then thoroughly blood red (having the longer
wavelength, greater patience weighing on her):
his violent beauty of composition
producing form from vista,
or she remembers hers.

