**Breathing in the Dark**

Beth Peterson

I sit on the empty back porch

watching the hard rain spill onto shadows

I swore you were in the window or at the door

You in all your rapturous glory, so bright

veiled moseses, curtained temples, three dashes

and my young skin couldn’t hide it

Your words hovered like birds

like honey smeared on my grandfather’s chalkboard

all over, the pasty chalk, the black stone,

the pale frame, my two bare hands

And it’s seeping into the cracks

this cold wet ground, glimpses of your smell,

the weight of autumn alone

under the streetlight that’s been out for years

So close to my exposed body, this hot breath

this breathing, my sometimes-scared religion