**Chilled Margin**

Carole Greenfield

*There is a great deal of the ascetic about me,* you observed

after a night given over to the sensual. I continued to kneel

on the floor, arms wrapped round your waist, bones

of my cheek pressed against your ribs.

*My heart beats strongly inside a thin chest,* you told me

the first time. Listening to that quick thumping, I understood

it was the only thing sure and steady within you.

Nothing else could be counted upon.

Not your lips in all their beautiful precision.

Not your skull in my palms, the perfect bowl of it,

hard and smooth and infinitely precious.

Neither these nor your hands that stroked and fingered,

pulled and dug in rhythmic refashioning of my form.

All of them, those parts shared so freely in darkness,

were taken back, retrieved without hesitation or regret.

You had cooled the way certain rocks do, rapidly,

a chilled margin like the stubble growing down your jaw

where you sat in my embrace, sealed by a bright glaze,

as if you had never rested warm and pulsing

in my arms, fitting the hard ridges and hollows

of your body to my deep curves,

my soft swelling.