**Apology**

Esther Ra

To write

you must be faithful

to clarity.

You must stitch rows of ducklings

with translucent, fine horsehair,

make them a limp and long necklace.

You must scissor the pale-pink,

silk folds of time, shearing

their gleams to curled memory.

You must be a fairytale magpie,

regarding all objects as jewels.

Tealights, coat hangers, lighters.

Nothing is unworthy of praise.

You must be a traitor at times:

compassionate, careful,

but ruthless.

You must write

the way wise queens

were known to weep:

achingly, achingly,

but with purpose.

You must not lose the soft

human within you.

Between life and the story,

choose more than the story.

*There are more things in life*

*than a story.*

For one word you speak,

hear a thousand.

Cling to both certitude

and mystery.

Be beyond and behind,

both removed and within.

Speak so that *you*

become silent.

Someone I loved once

read my poem about death.

His mother’s death—

And what we lost

to survive.

He read it four times

in sheer silence,

as I sat beside him

in clenched terror.

He was angry,

resigned, then relieved.

*Thank you,* he said,

*there was not a single lie*

*in that poem*.

I will forever be haunted

by those words