**Self-Elegy**

Joanne Durham

Say she tried

to wring tears from clouds

hang them on a line of stars to dry

poke holes in veils

to unwed herself from lies

leave more than breadcrumbs behind her

Say she never learned

to walk on eggshells

always cracking under her soles

Say she was stubborn

sunk her teeth into forbidden apples

juice dripping down her chin

It’s okay to say

she was afraid to die

expecting neither angels nor brimstone

though she worried

the world’s misery

might imply a vindictive God

Say she’d be relieved

to return as a sunflower

or a seagull’s wing dusting sky

but not

as a girl married off at twelve

Say she loved that every culture

has its own tortilla and dumpling

each language a different slice of moon

that she savored the seaweed she gathered

still sighing its ocean breath

that her laughter lightened over time

though it carried the weight

of broken branches

Say she kept believing

most of earth’s billions

hold kindness under their tongues