**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