

Pattiann Rogers

THE WAY I'M TAUGHT BY HEART

The way I'm taught how to move
my hand along the swelve
and lank of your naked back
is by having watched how a pine
in easy wind smoothes itself along
the close spine of a summer
night. The way I know how to drink
at your mouth is by remembering
my mouth at the earth once
taking sweet spring water
with my eyes closed.

I learn how to speak to you now
by imitating the cholla blossoms
who, in their hour, speak of lust
and expiation, and I seek you
in the same way the marblewings
opening in dampness at dawn admit
for their own edification every last
probe of sun possible.

Rising and falling inside your arms,
I understand how mosses and cress lose
and gain over and over inside the hold
of a stream. I've seen the headlong
push forward of a trout nudging
upcreek in a current.

Deep sea geographies of spiraling
canyons and cols, sudden stellar-scatters
and the chances beyond—these are the same words
as the words of your body, your name,

as I pronounce it, identical to wind-borne
rifings of rain above desert light.

Here I am, like God, the pulsing
center in a gather of waxwings widening
and tightening in their flock against
the sky, like God, a wayward thread
of cottonwood lifting over fields,
forswearing forever, all bones,
every place.

CREATION BY THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE: CITY COYOTE IN RAIN

She's sleek blue neon through
the blue of the evening. She's black
sheen off the blue of wet streets,
blue daunt of suspension in each
pendant of rain filling the poplars
on the esplanade.

Her blue flank flashes once in the panes
of empty windows as she passes.
She's faster than lighthouse blue
sweeping the seas in circles.

Like the leaping blue of flames
burning in an alley barrel, her presence
isn't perceived until she's gone.

She cries with fat blue yelps, calls
with the scaling calls of the rag men,
screeches a siren of howls along the docks
below the bridges, wails with the punctuated
griefs of drunks and orphans.