

## Five Poems · *Fleda Brown Jackson*

### LEARNING TO DANCE

When we waltzed with the senior citizens  
at the Pappy Burnett Pavilion,  
I felt how you moved slick as a cowboy,  
my own rough bones clicking beside  
you, trying to move the way trying can't  
go. I loved you, turning in yourself  
like a loose skin, and the woman  
who danced with her broom, and the old man  
round-dancing, his shirt open over  
his heavy belly, an old, old grace  
feeding him from the bass  
of the country band. I've always  
wanted to dance. Aspen leaves tambourine  
in the wind, needles flare from the tamarack  
branch like ballet skirts, and that  
Wednesday of the Central Lake Pavilion Dance  
travels miles in place, turning  
and returning to its original dark.  
Afterward, I pulled off my swimsuit in the lake  
and held you next to me, learning  
from your heart and the slap slap of waves  
on stones. What is it wants us to know  
where to step? Each pause  
brings us tight against the mouth  
of the earth, and then we raise one  
foot like the flame of a candle.  
Our bodies move in and out of the space  
we've held to be true, and something else  
sees each half turn as the whole dance.