

Winter Along the Santa Cruz · *Alberto Ríos*

Ground squirrels snap and turn
like the motion that spins a child's wooden top,
but the river sand is still, like heavy cream
left out too long, assuming the color
death requires, still and stretched:
severed long arm lying, crooked at its elbow,
white with the last summer pulses
of rain through its hard and thinning arteries
sucking in liquid instinctively, feeding
on itself, first from its fingers, then wrist,
taking everything in, leaving its parts dry,
the river consumes everything but the clear sweat
of its own effort, visible in the early morning,
beads carried off by the wind and the redbirds
and the sailors who are lost.