

deny their names in fog and ice. She's the base  
tagged and abandoned repeatedly.  
Watch out. Watch out. There's a sudden  
conflagration. A flame catches hold  
at the corner of this picture beginning  
to crisp and curl under, smoke and ashes moving  
rapidly in a diagonal across the world  
toward my fingers.  
But see, she's leaping, leaping,  
white now, invisible, up and out, escaping  
to clutch a bare branch as real and definite  
as this network of black cracks we see spread  
in its steady place across the blank,  
blank ceiling over our heads.

### TRIAL AND ERROR

The right prayer might be a falling  
prayer spiralling down in the throats  
and raised wings and white warmth  
of tumbling pigeons, the joy  
of a beseeching abandon, or a crossing  
prayer in the fingers of oak branches  
over themselves, their display  
of a hopeful wind, or a drifting  
prayer in the cerise petals  
loosed and dropping from a stalk  
of wild betony, a proclamation  
in dissolution.

It may take two every night, maybe three  
every dawn—prayers offered of one fact  
against another—milkweed against winter,  
reflected face against water, rapid  
barking against fear.

I can compose any kind, prayers wrapped  
in seaweed, rolled in grape leaves,  
prayers sent spinning tied to butterfly  
kites crackling in the sky over the sea,  
prayers in wax bound to stones sunk  
past coral cliffs or ice canyons  
to the ocean floor, prayers delivered  
with moans or howls, rattling gourds  
or timbales, prayers in the cadence of rain,  
prayers in the absence of breath.

I'll send them out in signs, lanterns  
on rooftops, candles on cairns, backward  
prayers like the dark side of the moon, prayers  
hung upside down by the knees, prayers  
beginning with praise, beginning with *Our Father*,  
with *Darling Mother*, with *Darkling Son*, fading  
off fast to *In the beginning* . . .

I'll become by myself, I swear,  
whatever prayer it takes, teeth, eyelids,  
ears, beatitude of knuckles, invocation  
of spine, a solid skeleton of the perfectly  
linked linguistics of prayer, hands  
pressed together before me,  
my whole body speaking,  
waiting.