

## Lipstick · Laura Jensen

Cosmetics are your noble  
benefactors, far away  
at department stores  
where the counter girls  
glare at your pale face,  
thinking you shoplift.  
You try a perfume and carry it  
at your now-royal wrist  
through all the rest.

The store  
is crowded and terrible. The lips  
of the women are red like alleys  
of cardinals, eyes are green  
like alleys of bamboo. But none  
of the colognes is like the scent of snow  
on bamboo, or rutted snow  
by the trees where cardinals slum  
alertly, saying *light. Morning.*

In the alley of *now* the dusk is  
trying out the garbage cans. Among them  
I am looking around at the dark  
after squashing down the trash somehow.  
Suspended in the heavens of  
the third floor, steam is still blurring  
my mirror, soap still haunting the air.  
My lipstick clings, cosmetic,  
reassuring, its scent feminine and hearty.

Dream: I am an Oriental print.  
I turned to walk down the road  
after companions when suddenly my face  
stopped living, a window painted shut.  
Of me there were single hairs, brown with damp,  
I was looking up. In the white air by me  
there was printed an emblem in a black square,  
a signature. I was what was there.