

Reginald Shepherd

CYGNUS

For Geoffrey Nutter

Persons reminded me of birds, a boy
who is a swan and is not mine,
white feathers that go by
clouds. He figures as constellation, clouds
in tight formation, forming him
or his impossibility of skin. That he is seen
to be beautiful, that he is called by strangers'
names, almost persuaded of September: that he
is torn from the white he makes
his home, falling as snow, down.
Boy who became a swan, buoyed through
blank night, stick figure fixed to several skies: wing
for a writing arm, he is a poet
scribbling down stars, their mouths
pinned open, hungering
in place. That he is seen to take flight
in magnitudes, that he persuades
himself to be observed at different proximities
to the horizon, that light bends
for him relative to the position he takes
regarding the sun. Star-mouth,
cloud-lip, northerly wing, my hands
are talced with a dust of feathers,
my hands are full of birds, all thumbs.
You fly through me.