



Jeanne Bryan

Four Poems

Persephone's Hell

was never what they said,
each one of them men
or gods, or mothers

wringing their hands
over virgins—or the womb
barren, because

it must be given and given
back. The only way to be pure
is to starve,

to glance at the cornucopian
spring, a season, a
horde of blossoms, a verb

meant to hotwire
the unsuspecting daughter
into myth.

Lament

Crossing a bridge in Capitola
in a rain so great
it would never end—
and a kink in my heart
that changed my name,
how deep, how fine
the glowing stream: and
on the rail, a pelican.

Handful of angles
and largesse of being,
laconically
looking into me—

No way to stop, no place to be—
except past,
then gone,
and memory.

First Fall

How this morning
silks of sunlight
multiplied
all summer's lost days
into one last gasp,
brighter
than the original push:

first fall,

wind of gold,
golden each shard
of grass, this plum's golden
taste
in my mouth,

how I am barefoot
in the window
that stops over
warm over cold, how

I sip this incidence
of you, a morning
already yellowing,
one dandelion sky
cracking
into this mess

a cruel, a most
comforting
old
Indian.

The Next If

Against. against.
this word holds up
a wall.

if only. I had known.
if love means love
at all.

a window. one pretty sky
all violet over
all, how I did

hope to watch the light
light up, the
deep night fall.

the next if,
if broken, will lose
this protocol,

has already grown
too small.

Jeanne Bryan has published work in *Abraxas*, *Kakako* and *the North Coast Literary Review*. She lives in San Francisco.

Image: “Persephone” from *Until The Stars Fall From The Sky* (a blog).