

## PERSEUS

The afternoon breaks into a glide  
across the alder leaves. Glittered  
by afternoon light, and the light  
wind, breaking from its glide to graze

the alder. Not biting deep as my axe  
into the sacred thighs. Laid open they are  
raw as blood.  
Everything is made spectator

in the glare. St. John's wort  
coats the bank beside the cabin.  
The railroad lines jam like fangs  
into the distance. Sunflowers turn

like spotlights as the alder topple,  
one sigh of air stashed behind the other.

The effort forces out of me a force  
into the air and leaves all the senses  
shining like windows to the sun I bare  
at last for you, Madonna. All my senses

shining on the skin you bare and braid  
with snakes as you stretch out  
in the grass. He is fate. Fate,  
you say. The day and all my senses

shining. Like a locomotive braking  
for a station, the sun — or your blood —  
screaching to a halt  
in the ear.

—George McWhirter