

ALISON TOUSTER-REED

Like Very Old Lace

I lie still next to my other body,
my hornet-thought.
I wait for it to breathe, like
a sword with lungs.
I watch myself and it,
two eyes on a tripod beyond the dresser.
I am the dresser; waist 24,
Calvin Klein 1, soft sweaters over tight
tops, shoes to match some hint of colour.
My own body glistens like a snake,
pale as a moth and as thin.
I would disintegrate were I caught
and rubbed between your fingers.
My thoughts fly around the room,
wrinkled like small fish.
My mind is a vine, lost in the hoarseness
of its turns and crossings from tree to tree.
(Like me, the oaks are thin and limber as streak lightning.)
My soul's grown thin and watery
as Ophelia's grave and my eyes
glint like darts atop my skeleton.
Use your reason to eat, Mother says.
Find yourself in my words, she says,
that hang like herbs in my kitchen,
a kind of chemistry. You will fly away.
Cover with four wool comforters every night
to weight you down. My thought is,
I say, I need to be next to a fleshed body—
I need to be the fleshed body.

But I lie beside myself, touching two toothpicks
or linking two bobby pins,
waiting to go to Florida
where the residential centre is
more like a retreat,
where the mothers are,
where the light is
to which moths like me are drawn.