

VERLAINE'S HAT

BERNDT SELLHEIM

As elegant as
Verlaine's hat –
crumpled splendid dignity
ever drunk but never gauche
Paris is the inner thigh
of someone beautiful,
afterwards.

A breath of summer
pheromones, and that clover
animal skin of post-love,
that I still have you clinging—
your out-of-body opioid
of folded selves

and streetlights turning
into stars, planets,
the whole twisting array
of cosmic dust

stretching the Seine
from here to Berlin.
Give me back the flask, love,
this sky needs drinking.

THE STICKS

With earthen dark about her head,
humid and persistent, she winds
each moment, like butchers string
about the smallness of her hands.

A rehearsal for remembering.
Her waking body in a dream
dissolved—not death but
fading, disappearance

neither gush nor sigh, just this silence
of hollowing, until
she is no longer
contained, can no longer hold

one hand within another
and touch that *what it is*: body,
being there,
separate from darkness.