IT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO FALL IN LOVE IN BLACKBERRY SEASON

You might enter the many dark chambers without this tender clustering.
you might start by washing your lover’s mouth in snow or tease apart the spring tendril root of him,
or scrape the old leaves out of his autumn hair on your way to making his acquaintance in loam,
but if it is chosen in the kingdom of blackberries that you shall be one of the ones,
one of the many clusters of ones, that among the thorns and giant snails
you and he shall wade the slimy, primordial rocks of the creek to get to the blackberries leaning over the current, and if whoever sees one first
shall place it onto the waiting, snail-like ravenous tongue of the other
and know the gift of the other’s pleasure before he dismantles with his gentlest caliper fingers the next dark ripe one, leaving
the brightness for later, the suck and give
of the pale, moist, naked, astonished stem-head among the young screaming red ones for later and place that next, that dark, that ripe one on your tongue so that always, when you kiss, the explosion of ankle-breaking cold and warm purple liquid earth will alarm and comfort you back to the beginning of gathering everything in sight,
the ruin already in it, the bleeding and the rot and plundering birds already in it,
a sharp, riotous darken-ness already in it, then will you be ready to lay your lives, together, down in thorns?

BEHN
THE SHINING

It is the beginning of her shining
and the beginning of her shining hour.
She has had the dream about the woman in white
and entered her shining final hours.

It is the essence of her leaving,
the leavening of what has been borne.
A white tear off the edge of her voice,
walking toward her, full blown.

The woman, coming over a hill.
A shining woman cresting the shining hill,
trailing my mother’s name from her mouth
like a scarf of white bees,
lacey white clover honey
death-words in her mouth.

It is where I am not meant to be.
This daughter, not meant to be.
I am certainly not the woman in white
and neither, yet, is she.

I am not the nurse she tells it to
and I am not the gown made of liquid light
and I’m still not the one who ought to tell this tale
lest she hear me from her side of the hill.

It was her own mother, with plenty of time.
It was a creature of recompense and sense
and it was her Snowball, the white cat, found.

And it was like when she fished or cooked,
getting it right, giving patience its form.
It was a snow-choked Zhivago final scene
and her own painting painting her own white hand.

(It was not her previous version,
the white-clad night nurse shaking her loose
as a limp-headed doll, and this time nothing
was noted in the chart since there was nothing
to dutifully follow-up or deduce.)

How do the dead come for the dead?
What is our job and what will it be?
What happens in the crossing that the face is lost?
By whom, by what feature, shall our promises be bound?

It was two days before, and meant to be.
Prelude of her crossing to receive herself,
the self’s most pretty self saying yes and come with me,
so, when my sister finished singing her across,

my sister singing, singing her across,
singing every folk song and hymn she knew,
the only one there was the white one who heard
the shining in the singing, so she flew.