

NIKELLE

# APOTHEGM POETICA

do i begin with the snake in hand lusting  
after its own warm & acrid ending or the

skin sloughing off in the river rather, am i  
the holder or the held thing the poet guides

her pen so smartly & notes down the declarative  
statements: *I am, I feel, I know*. never not writing

the poem—do i show you the dead thing or just  
conjure immobility. the cracked shape of a body

or split the line. a failure of proper address,  
a shading in of the background, hours poetica.

still, the issue of the trees. there was a time  
when i would run through them searching

for anything bearing the shape or heat of  
another. the declarative statement: it is

possible to continue artlessly. to shake it  
from the lowest bough, turn it into something

else dead. to elegize the sun-cracked dirt, to  
slither through the wake of lushness looking

for someone to speak poison to  
or the trees, knowing what they know

encounter the serpent & pause  
breathing vowels into warm wind

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entice back to the art of it, the coaxing  
of the blank page back from oblivion.

to struggle in plain sight against the veneer  
of courage. to leave the body of the serpent

without any teeth in its head. instead, go quietly  
towards darkness. the deep end of the river rocking

as if to prove itself a cradle,  
as if to say you are still my baby.