

PTERYLAE

Ava Morgan

Maman was a bird woman—flighty, and
“fettered” to the ice box.

Pickled eggs and gurgled styrofoam cracks.
Pectinate pickings and sauerkraut stench.

When did we three meet again?
I remember only red bricks and rain.

Craft-paper antennae stitched to headbands,
tutus peeling underhand into pine needles.

Lilted morning song merged with my bearded crowings
but met with Mama’s glare, ruffled underpinnings.

If my destiny had always manifested dress, why
did the thunderbolt smooth like clay in my hands?

My shame in my very beak. Fragile boughs of juniper berry jars.
The trees branching into church pews. A fallen chick in the grass.

And what then, what then? Gone are my
halcyon days, Maman. *D’elle à iel*. I’m sorry.

Hands broke the chick’s breastbone, splattered bleat
and lightning flash—fluidity replaced my
lace beginnings, alkaline screech and acid breath—
drums replaced the stoic beat—raw howl and muscle wake
—I pressed the broken flesh to tongue
and feathers dissolved into beast.