BONE POEM

The litter under the tree
Where the owl eats — shrapnel

Of rat bones, gull debris —
Sinks into the wet leaves

Where time stirs with her slow spoon,
Where we becomes singular, and a quickening

From light-years away
Saves and maintains. O holy

Protein, o hallowed lime,
O precious clay!

Tossed under the tree
The cracked bones

Of the owl's most recent feast
Lean like shipwreck, starting

The long fall back to the center —
The seepage, the flowing,

The equity: sooner or later
In the shimmering leaves

The rat will learn to fly, the owl
Will be devoured.

AUNT LEAF

Needing one, I invented her —
the great-great-aunt dark as hickory
called Shining-Leaf, or Drifting-Cloud
or The-Beauty-of-the-Night.

Dear aunt, I'd call into the leaves,
and she'd rise up, like an old log in a pool,
and whisper in a language only the two of us knew
the word that meant follow,

and we'd travel
cheerful as birds
out of the dusty town and into the trees
where she would change us both into something quicker —
two foxes with black feet,
two snakes green as ribbons,
two shimmering fish —
and all day we'd travel.

At day's end she'd leave me back at my own door
with the rest of my family,
who were kind, but solid as wood
and rarely wandered. While she,
old twist of feathers and birch bark,
would walk in circles wide as rain and then
float back

scattering the rags of twilight