

Bathing in Mexico

The road around Oaxaca
dusted alongside spout after spout
of steaming water
rising like ash in the morning air.
A hot spring was built over one fissure
with a wall shadowing
the bath from the road.

Slipping off all my clothes
I entered the bath
each cement step
bringing heat closer and closer
to my face. I moved around her
from ledge to ledge with sighs
like steam rising from my skin.

Her dark skin caught the sun,
as she adjusted the strap
of her yellowed slip.
She sat silently in the water,
all of her underthings on
Her hair splayed outward
like an ancient, black lily.

Motioning to my clothes
she asked why I did not
wear them in the bath.
I replied by asking her
why she did.

Then I showed her how to disturb the water
and she showed me how to sit still.