

MARIA NAZOS

LOVE POEM TO A TREE

After he and I stayed too late at a party between parties, I said I was through with the fighting, for there are too many fights

in this world. Say it to the tree, he said. The tree's shadow quivered in the window like an orgasm in the dark, and his hair was wild

nighttime vines, and I said to the tree, "I want to love you," and he asked me to say it again, and so I said, "I want to love you,"

which I thought the same as telling him, because everything is connected. But then he went back to Iowa. And I feel the empty

hiss between my shoulders. How difficult to speak to a world whose beauty reflects blank loss: from the breakwaters, to the sand dunes,

to every face, wanting them to tell me he'd be back from the gold-choked cornfields. But none of it replied. The world seemed a hollow

canyon without echo I'd call into for him. Until he's back. Present in everything. Even that tree: now I can speak to you again—

I hate this earth for burying you standing up. Demand to know why. And so the glittering dunes refuse to answer.

And so the deserted lobster pots on the docks refuse to answer, and the fishermen with skin like old boxing gloves I've searched, hoping to find

yours underneath, refuse to answer. I keep saying, "I want to love you." But words are impossible to say to the one

who was never here. And so I kept saying, "I want to love you." Until I came to love this strange world. With or without you in it.