

On Monogamy

by Alison Reed

People pore over the animal kingdom
sizing up the sex lives of penguins. Do they vow
until death do us part? Doubtful, but I've seen
an elephant paint herself
and weep. A cat peering into a mirror sees an enemy
or nothing to do
with her own breathing body.

My age doesn't dull desire but intensifies it
in one direction.

When she asked if she could kiss me
I almost thought her sexual shadow
strong enough to spurn
the cradle of romantic love,
knowing everything is not free.

We cajole our tender worship.
Our limbs flailing
trunks and brushes,
your forearms flanked with feathers
with iron
with flight
with fear of tar

one would not shed
to bulldoze the weight of history
in our reflections,
between our acrylic and sequin palms.
Time aches on indifferent to the breadth
or depth of longing. The gallery glints, but
the art of us makes a forever student of me.