True Form
By Marirose Bernal

Even the flowers think they know me,
the river curving around autumn light,
the humming mushrooms on the path out back.

I emerge into my true form only when it grows dark.
Only when the world is too black to see through
and I know the shape of me will blend in:
liquid, shifting, a body made entirely of blood
(and entirely the color of oil).

When there is no moon, I transcend,
altering and remolding my mass.
Like a snake, I have a certain sheen,
a certain song, a certain scream.

I have ten beautiful black scales instead of
fingernails. I have a forked tongue
tucked behind my teeth, sharpened
on sunshine. I have entire eyes
as black as ink.

I’m shapeless. My frame
has no formula, my body
knows no bounds. I slither
between one world and the next.

Animals don’t look at me while I ebb and flow.
Only the cats, the serpents, and the deer with their eyes like marbles
will watch my moving shadow. This is the only time
I ever enter the ocean, knowing I cannot drown.
The water pulls away its tide,
stays separate,
like Moses I spill easily across the sea floor.

I seep into the dark of the trees.
I lie pooled on the summer grass.
I breathe in the only way that blood can:
long and slow, deep, gasping, aching, 
a dream drenched in nighttime.

Like a fountain that refills itself, everything 
that drips off my eyelashes 
is gathered back into my form. 
Only when dawn arises do I feel the threat 
of melting and light-headed murder.

I sink back into the earth, 
become a girl again, 
or at least – one kind.