the red
after Billy Collins

You, you were once
the smoke curling off the tongue,
the puff riding against a marbling sky,
ashy grey and steady blue.

You are the single spiderweb the light does not catch.
You are the bare mug of tea,
scalding and steeping still.

You are the drench of algae-filled water,
the gust of convection wind from the oven,
burning off mascara.

Oh, but you are not the bushy fingertips of evergreens.

You are the red of tiny veins in the eyes,
of school sneakers, the red of songs burned into
brain cavities.