

## **PRAYER FLAGS**

The living catch and rub  
each other down to reveal

not stone or gold but  
subterranean water

unfurling like rags  
torn from the shirt my lover

wore the day we met, and braiding  
the bedsheets ripped

still warm when we parted. These poor  
flags strung from arterial

branches bear my broken  
pledge to honor what I can't

keep and to live with what I can't tear  
away. Note the cracked cup with its restless

lip-mark gathering dust by the phone. Through all  
the vertigo between hello

and good-bye, I hummed tenderly while  
polishing our alabaster

bowls with scraps of indigo  
and with my own fine hair. But finally

every story spills out as emergence or  
emergency, depending on one's view

of the hole in the ozone  
left by having a self.

**Kate Fetherston**