THE DEVIL’S WORKSHOP

XAVIER CAVAZOS
I was cleaning
The Top
of the ceiling

like a caged orangutan.
        The poison coming out of me.

        Each brown hair on my body
blown flat like Armageddon trees from all the sweat.

I was cleaning the black stains
        that floated
to the top of the white walls from my bubble-clubbed glass pipe.

        Hands black as the rim
of my mouth after rubbing the burnt belly of the bowl.

She locked herself
in the bathroom for hours—tried to get the insects
under her skin to come out & forward into the world
        of the dead.

        I laughed
as her face fell onto the floor like all of her dreams,
& her mother tried to have me arrested—

no law against pick a face
    off.

    Together
we were part of something whole.

We’d smile at each other,
my black mouth

    and hands, her face
    on the floor.
made arrows from broad wings.
   A tall light-brown raptor with many nests.

My father, the bird of prey—
   “I love you” was always a hundred-dollar bill

of speedbump-hotwired heartbeat & shrugs in the morning.
   “I’m sorry Mijo,” he would say. The electricity bill lost

for ten years & a house kept warm
   from a small fire burning on the stove.

Patience holds the mold on the wall. Maybe we were hares,
   rabbits, marmots, and ground squirrels

   to him. Oh, the tricks
   he played in the air—

his voice a flame-in-fever on
   the cliff he was clinging to.

A chirp, a seeir, a pssa, a skonk, a honk, a wonk,
   a hiss, but usually a cluck
on a ledge—

my father’s voice.

My father, good eagle that he was
    thought all his children could soar—

that all of us would have a strong hallux claw—
    my weapon of choice. So I dove with him—

hit after hit—my feather tracts erect.
    Eyes bugged & ready to pluck,

or grab, any white-shiny-thing
    from the carpet fuzz.