

Illinois Route 3

by Justin Hamm

If this road could answer
I would ask her what it is like
to follow the path
of the rippleshimmery river
for too many miles
through the slowly ghosting towns
and the corncovered landscapes
of the dying Midwest
first through hills so subtle
they seem like mere rumors
and then through more
significant undulations
rising up suddenly
like tumors— only to be abandoned
completely spent and alone
in some lesser Cairo
long before you could ever tune
your ear to the lovely blue notes
of Memphis, Tennessee
or feel the tingling creepies
drifting out from the voodoo
niches of New Orleans

I would kneel down right here
where the darkness is thickest
and hides the sign that warns
Danger: Falling Rock
and I would listen as the one
tiny swath of pavement
glowing brightest white
under the sharp cuticle moon
speaks of its great envy

and the river pageants past
like so many onetime lovers
all arrogant momentum
all callous purpose
without the slightest
hint of hesitation

