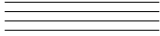


S K I N O F C L A Y



D E B O R A G R E G E R

Akiyama Yo, November 3, 2014

He let the clay do the talking.
It was more comfortable around English
 than he was.

To the mud, he spoke with his hands,
but first he listened to what it wanted.
 Outside, a sun

absently waxed another leaf.
Florida traffic washed by in waves.
 On a folding chair,

I folded myself. Clay dust sifted upon me
as if it were snow. Why had I worn black?
 I couldn't change –

I had entered a room in Kyoto. A man held clay
he slapped into an earth about to be born.
 He lit a blowtorch,

though he wore no gloves. He would peel the body
like a tangerine, his translator said. First,
 he had to crack its skin –

no, he had to give it one.
The clay wanted, like riverbed, to parch.
 To craze with heat.

*"Why do you strip me from myself?" Marsyas howled.
For daring to challenge the flute of a god.
 The skin, flayed from his body,*

*left nerves exposed. Lungs ripped the air apart.
The chambers of a heart filled and tore.
 The clay inside lay wrenched, raw.*