

SKIMMING THE POND

Jane Poston

In the colder winters,
the Japanese carp suck
the ice for oxygen,
and we put our ears
to the snow over the pond
to listen with breaths held
for the long hiss
that is ghostly
and underneath
like our hearts.

And when, like shadows,
the carp rise, one by one,
under the surface of the ice,
we get the buzzsaws,
cut a hole in the ice.
The carp leap up
crimson and sun-orange
striking the snow. Scattered,
they could be poppies,
or orchids waving
their heavy waxen heads.
Still, we picture them
changed from this form—
pink and fine-boned
as a love poem
I would write you.

Always there is something new
to learn at this game.
Like this—you say
and snap a spine between
thumb and fingers.
Like this—turning pliers
plucking fins into a bowl.

It is what to do
to anything unfamiliar
or too delicate.
It is what to do to anything
that takes the place of
what one cannot approach.