

## Helium

Mary Ruefle

You are helium. You make everything rise.  
You are so precious the gods quarrel over you.  
They invented time for you. When you didn't  
like it, they broke the hands from the clock  
so you could write. They invented Esperanto  
for you, but you didn't like that either  
so went out and wept bitterly, for which they  
turned your tears into Sprite, because men  
and women are easily bored by the passage of time  
and the facts of life and need a fountain.  
A large part of your problem is death,  
which is lifeless and unhelpful. Night returns  
to stay another night. Even the unconscious  
mollusks are conscious of that. And the drama  
of bloodroot—teeny flowers falling apart,  
gigantic leaf growing all summer—gods everywhere  
with different ideas. They invented color  
for you, which split into colors, all of which  
ended up in little numbers dispersed throughout  
what is now called the living room. And still  
you are in shambles, and lie down and levitate  
for the happy futile future. O Sheer One,  
they made you in different combinations  
in different directions so you could retell  
the diaspora of exasperation. They gave you  
a dibble. They made you wrists. They made you  
the germ of an idea, one would think it would  
be greatly in the idea's way—  
yet the heart hanging in the pear tree  
is finally cut down. You did everything  
with your own two hands.