

The craftsman of this black cup is a mystery.
As pleased mad Dionysus, it was burnt black.
The potters gave it ivy and the eyes
of its king, and they gave it its king, robed.

To make the cup concave inward,
it was molded around a little planet
the god had brought with him from India.
They cast the side shaded by night

and painted out the stars with an ink
derived from plum leaves. To kiss the lip
of this cup and to drink is to hold a stretch
of horizon in one's mouth. One's eyes should not

open in drink or kiss, lest the drinker see down
to the ocean floor, at the undying
god himself, undisguising himself.
To drink directly is to be avoided.

The black cup was intended for dipping,
mainly in the white new snow, and pouring
the ill water of the grape, seen swallowed
down the cup's bottomless throat, but tipped

and offered back again, a stream rolling around
the mother's petals and down the mother's knees
to sea, like the forest spring whence issues
powdered stone dissolved in bitumen and cheap

off-brand soda. Here the nighttime god is shown
seated on the cleft trunk of a cypress, reaching out
for the woolly leggings of beast-faced satyrs
who attend their patron's left and right, Jove's

two splendid bollocks. Ivy tendrils wind between
them and fill all the empty areas. I find that
the glass case containing this cup can be crushed
like a paper carton. A heavy smoke hangs

off of the ceiling and billows around. The room
is filled with fetid, wet breath instead of air
conditioning. The restrooms are a humid jungle.
The stairway is cold as winter.

A pile of carrion in the coatroom, and sounds.