

—+ **KATHY PARA** | thin

at first
I feel nails in my belly
pointed iron poking the balloon
between my spine and my spleen

sand in my mouth
that doesn't yield to water
Sahara in my throat
an expanse of desert so dry
jackals would not survive

tuna, lettuce, spaghetti,
eating is not an option

after a few days the need to vomit
fades like wallpaper in the sun
but my mouth refuses food

I become thin
feasting only on delicate wafers
of air

my bum shrinks
my belly inverts
famine etches new lines on my face

after a month
my hair falls out in clumps
scalp shining in the light

chairs, trees, stairs, leaves
all are edged
as if a child has dipped a pen
in ink and outlined each object
with black

I separate from the body
floating stage right
poaching thoughts
that stream through its brain
craving crystalline oxygen
served in intoxicating crumbs

fingernails break
clothes hang
knees clank together in bed
bone against bone
still, I can't make it eat

even when I peel off its coat
its sweater, the vest underneath
the jeans, the T-shirt, the bra
and have it stand in front of the mirror
run its fingers across ribs
jutting hip bones
scrawny thighs

it will not eat

the body makes its meal
of brain cells and hoarded fat
bone marrow and muscle tissue

it writes me a suicide note
that says

marmalade on toast
was my favourite