

How  
to Make a Jade Bonsai —

Although I have watched the demon-  
strations, I end up feeling sorry for the trees.  
They only want, deep in their roots, to be bushes,  
sprawling, free.

Instead, they are wired in place, limbs stretched and bent back  
like a woman in bondage,  
a forced stillness.

The bonsai master explains to me why it's all very beautiful,  
and I agree there is something exquisite about the shapes we can twist a body into,  
the rigors of pain,  
and what unfolds within as we strip freedom away, embrace deprivation,  
and accept the thirst to be  
smaller.

The scholar in my head chides:

it isn't  
your  
task  
to  
speak  
this  
way;  
just  
leave  
the tree  
to its trainer—  
whose cuts signify love  
in ways you will never understand.