

EMILY KENDAL FREY / Athena and Zeus

Athena

I had not known it, but I lived
inside my mother's head—her face God-like,
white, a cast. Neck coiled in a snake,

ready to strike. My own eyes
slits beneath the heavy chalked lids.

How did I come then,
to haul myself up the scaffolding she'd left,
fist after fist, to crawl and stretch—
the glowing oval of her mind
hanging like a moon above me.

I cracked the crown—
pressed out and through, black bird
singing in my chest,

no light, no breath, my voice
still clinging to her lips

Zeus

My father swallowed
me—a swaddled rock,
he ate me in clothes, in cloth.

I hid in a cave, in a mountain,
was given the stars, heaven

as compensation.

Eternally, I failed at being
his son. I could not make myself

a man. Brain a perfect
pink fish. I kept my body

fresh. Had thunder
in my hands. A heart of crushing
granite. I fought

my sisters off,
a wound, a warden, alone, home.