

LOUISA HOWEROW

## ALISTRATI CAVE, 2005

The cave opens in a pastoral hillside  
where the guide warns us

she'll speak only Greek,  
and we're to touch nothing. *Entáksi*,

I butcher the word. I hope it means 'okay.'  
It's not length, height, age of the cave,

but possibility I seek here. I imagine a day  
when rain and sun weren't enough,

when Plouton led Persephone through  
a gash in the earth into a blue-green

chamber, its stalactites hanging  
like a shepherd's flute. She followed

willingly, curious to see the veins  
of water that cut rock. His hand on hers

she stroked the calcite butterflies, pearls.  
Who wouldn't want to live in two worlds,

believing we'd be safe in both? The guide leads us  
to stalagmite flames, so many chambers

still to explore. In the myth, it's the mother  
who needs her daughter's return.