

Three Strikes

Balancing in the *howling* wind
on a *high wire of my own making*
And then

A rap on my swollen knuckles
with a ruler as hard as stone
Strike one, they say
and don't let it be seen
in this *provincial* paper again

And all because I laid eyes on the perpetrator

The fist punishes as it swings across
my tender skin;
the chilled hand stings
against my hot face
Strike two, they say

and don't let it happen
in your journal again

And all because I pointed one finger

The whip slices through my bruised and bare back
like a hot knife through butter;
I, a magnet for both the leather
and adversity
Strike three, they say
and don't let it exist
in your thoughts again

And all because I said his name aloud

You're Out
shackled and imprisoned
silenced, without a voice
blind without a voice
lost without a voice
dead within
until, afraid of the upheaval,
not

guilty

And I begin again
old but brand new
incipient voice
struggling but flourishing
straining to be heard

Will I ever really
Be free?

As I wonder