The Sweet Witty Soule of Ovid

Ovid, your gods are rapists.
A panic rash of treebark
Plaques up Daphne’s calves,
And it is poetry to you.

A hand across a mouth
Gets pricked on a new beak.
An earlobe dripping blood
Explains the red in redbreast.

Ovid, most of these girls
Were underage. But then it’s all
Material, the same old trauma
For you to ring the changes on.

I did the intake interview once
On a fifteen-year-old girl
Who had more suicide
Attempts than birthdays.

When she was ten her stepdad put her
In a noose he’d knotted to a rafter.
He held her legs and drove a wedge
Between her childhood and her,

And as he stood with her impaled
On him, he said *Me doing this*
*Is all that’s keeping you alive*
*Right now so thank me.*

Ovid, you witty bastard,
Just once I want to hear you say
It’s not okay. Not even
For Apollo Belvedere.

She would have loved to flee
Into the form of a laurel tree
Or if not that, a sparrow, slamming
Birdbones on those basement walls.

She spent a decade looking
For a way to change her body.
Last May, she cut her wrists
And turned into a stream.