

## Exploratory Mechanisms

We ride wild bears into the tremendous wilderness of the heart. We walk single file under the cascade, feeling the water's course pumping through our arteries. Speedwell creeps amid mosses. Rain—we think of rain—though the river is low in this season. And the rocks are always slippery, the gel of freshwater algae, the slime of decayed foliage, the slick smooth surface of polished quartzite, all hazardous. We think of ice, rain's winter sister, how it falls frozen into stalactites, smooth swords, bright teeth of a different season, and we feel cold to the bone—soaked—like a sodden grizzly after its hunting swim. We begin shaking. Is it fear or irritation or the preliminary to a long roll in dry grass, a nap in the sun? The bears murmur in their sleep. Some of us stay. Some run.