

Broken Dam

Tangerine fibers, sticky in your teeth
Honey hair hanging over your eyes
I made you a wreath of carnations
But the flowers were too big

You speak over pots of gold
And colors I can barely see
It's gibberish mostly
Like this scheme within me
That you are a soul sent for molding

For the cursive in the small swirls
Of your left iris reads,
'A future is mine to hold,
And it's as dangerous as white capped rapids.
Mama, do you want me to be
Exactly like you are?'

Okay, I nod, I understand.
You push from inside your lip
Is it food? No a bottom tooth
Pink and stringy gums touch my palm
I say, 'Show me what you got.'

You stretch your mouth and
Through the gap left behind
Is a mischievous red
flowing in a broken dam

Then you smother the stream
With your tongue until a
Pain holds your face
And all else goes away when you
begin to cry

Autumn in Amsterdam

Over the sound of rumbling and
our youngest daughter's squealing
I can hear you say, 'I'm sorry.'

The train shoots along,
Purple wilderness becomes bricks becomes graffiti under highways
I make out 'Fuck U' and 'Peace' in red cursive.

Little Annie squirms and struggles in my lap
I tickle her sides
Outside becomes a gray meadow
The train lists and slides to a stop
Without screeching
My head still throbs and beats
A black patch flashes quick over the meadow
Pulsing with the rhythm of my heart

Now you say 'Autumn in Amsterdam'
In that voice you use to make me laugh.
I cover my eyes with my hand
To block out the overcast light

Stories to Manage the Pain

There were things I couldn't say.
A shouting match comes through my open window,
I sink further into my bed.

First it's your face is red and moving
In the heat of my eyelids.
My disappointment mediated by the
Fascination of my quiet place of
Secret beings that act for me
Like nothing that was felt couldn't be spoken
Or that love wasn't some rope strung up
And jumped over and over and over again.

Downstairs a fly buzzes around the sink
The air fills the room without really moving
Then there is so much wind.
Is it a horde of flies?
Come for me if I don't move, if I don't say a word?

A Bike Ride Through the City

Beauty rings far and near
All through the city
I get on my bike--
Who is swinging that damned bell again?

People say to covet good is to lose it
It wants what it can't have
Because if you've ever had it
You know it comes when you've
Got your head in your hands
When the washer and dryer are
Churning out some rolling and
Your daddy's kicking in the back of some couch.
Under rocks and in secret villages of ants and june bugs
There it is!

I grip the handle bars
Cruising down a dim street
Friends calling my name and saying,
"Oh shit!" when seeing me keep on riding.

A siren roars from somewhere behind me
I pull to the sidewalk and tip down to the curb
Elbows on my knees
Nothing except for that screaming
Drowned out to the max

Different Falls

The stone-faced woman sits down
And wraps her legs around her lover.
I look at you
Look at them,
We both look away.

I know that when you fall apart,
You look like a robot
That has been turned off.
Your shadow slumped against
Flickering streetlights.

Do you think about love?
In such a form as to engage
Entangled limbs on dusty tanbark
Inside of a hot day,
Under the haze of a festival
White tapestries like sails
Billowing in the wind above?