

## Performance

I never was much good with words,  
or spinning tales like yarns in the tiny pink blanket that Ruth made for me.  
In front of a crowded room, I have  
to take my glasses off just to remember what I have to say.  
It's worse when I'm with you,  
my jaw locks up like I got tetanus from the rust in my pickup lines.  
Speechless in love or in anger, or  
when asked a question in class about the meaning of my art.  
I don't know, okay. It means nothing,  
everything to me, these marks on a page, the words in my throat, stuck there like the grape I choked  
on when I was four.  
Sitting on the bed as you scream,  
begging for an adult reply, and I have no voice to tell you that I can't.  
Because my communication skills  
stopped growing with me when I was fourteen, even though my vocabulary expanded.  
And I'm sorry that my silence drives you mad.  
If I could, I would unhinge myself, and  
all my responses would tumble out, eloquent and shining and hot as the water we shower in.  
I would open myself to you, guide  
your fingers into the wetness of my lungs and liver.  
Maybe you would find something  
worth keeping down in my core,  
something that explains all my  
performance problems.