

## **the facial**

my treasures wait howling in a bowl  
a woman smelling of frankincense or is it  
cedar enters and announces in a voice like candlelight  
that this is my time un-  
flickering I drift  
expand beneath her petal hands she takes them  
one by one like two fish gooey fragrant boneless  
meeting in a salty sea it will be hard to  
leave this aquarium of ease my body is  
liquidating honeylike  
new  
traveling alone in an  
almond coconut scented underworld of unfamiliar  
ease this thick and steaming breeze  
or is it a river bears me deeper  
aside and within I'm  
peaceful now accessible to  
all like the weather like a  
mountain of gold

## **The Challenge of Growing Up in the Mountains**

My skewbald pony, invisible to others,  
as we made our way down to the beaver dam,  
beyond the grove of maples, once tapped,  
now left, because of the grasses, grown so tall,  
velveteen riding hat bouncing as  
we trotted out in front, the place

I'll always be, if you'll let me.  
My mother and sisters followed behind,  
dappled by shadows, caught in a swoon  
of humming insects and the summer song  
of the forest and its damp embrace,  
green upon green, and soothing, vast enough

for their daydreams, but as I said, I was up ahead  
parting a sea of grass,  
leather reins loose in my hands  
because this pony and I trusted each other,  
or so I imagined, as determined, we pushed on  
towards the beavers and their dim, unseen,

mystical, falling-down eden, their ongoing constructing  
of dams and eating of saplings,  
and the blond blazes they left there, along with sawdust  
scattered salt-like on the ground;  
a parallel lifetime, worlds away  
from dishes, napkins and polished spoons,

my grandmother doing needlepoint by the pool,  
an empty hammock swaying in shade.  
She'd wonder where we'd gone,  
whether to delay the tea, praying for  
no visitors from town—ones who might somehow,  
in Lilys and pearls, alter the buzzing sunbright garden.

Peonies, honeysuckle, hummingbirds, flat-  
faced pansies, she closes her eyes,  
envisions us, scouting for beavers,  
forests away, horse tails flicking, the  
easily miss-able twitch of pointed chestnut-  
colored ears, deerflies stinging, on narrow paths,

meandering through the standing and fallen-down trees,  
a pond overgrown and stagnant,  
world within world, unseen, inscrutable,  
where not a beaver would be seen,  
only the signs of beaver, the eaten trees,  
the creatures themselves in quivering intermission

while snorting horses pounded by  
like a kind of weather that must be waited out  
patiently. The horses' manes beneath our hands  
is what I will remember, and the smell  
of the horses, and the warm of sun,  
the creak of tack, and the hope

and the dazzling, clandestine mystery  
of the beavers, and then back home, no phones  
to tell our plans through, not that, yet,  
no portals to the place where my grandmother waits  
worrying just a little  
stitching more blue into the sky.

## late may northern vermont

sinking into an emerald short grass long grass dream  
blue sky yields to gray while in the distance  
golden beams illumine mountains

small brown birds pirouette around the trees  
and no one notices how slow the world spins  
or how the weeping willow bends

as the swimming pool glistens  
and the dogs bask snoring in the sun  
a fox rears russet in the field then runs

pounces  
only to rise pointy-faced and mean  
a soft gray field mouse dangling

limp in its jaws while  
the hungry fox trots  
to the place

where the trees begin  
where a deer or two will soon  
come out to graze on moonlight

flopping white tails  
alert and poised to run  
from the likes of us

as we fold and put away the striped towels  
retrieve the solo cups and mustard  
the dappled plates

living here we close the day  
as though it were a soft green door  
while the sky transforms

pink and peach and passionate above us  
quiet though easing foretelling  
bewitching the ones who live here

like us

## **poem about the moon and things**

the moon is a sliver again  
bright against the black branches  
bright against the mountains  
bright the way I need it to be tonight

moonlight has always been mine  
remember the way the moon  
would follow our station wagon  
when we were children

and it hovered in the sky when I lay in the field  
with the man I married for a time not long  
it shone on the water  
when we swam that day

driving down the dirty road that leads to home  
the children are grown  
my son spent last night in jail  
with five strangers

i waited until the moon was full  
before i fetched him  
scratched and angry and sad  
they'd taken his phone his wallet and keys

his jeans were torn at the knees  
I drove him to the police station  
where his belongings were given  
back to him

in a brown paper bag  
which he rifled through in the back seat  
like a young racoon  
while the moon

shone down  
its silver light  
forgiving  
us

maybe and tonight  
the moon is a kind of friend  
again it waxes and wanes  
like joy and sadness

feast and famine a  
constant yellow  
gold  
and

maybe that is all we need  
because everything  
moves  
and changes

doesn't it  
gets locked up  
then freed  
while the moon reflects

an invisible sun  
keeping all the promises and secrets  
pocked and beaming  
unlike us

## The Screened-In Porch

Sequestered from the rest of the world there is a hush  
in here you don't find out there  
where the birds cackle and spar  
in the branches of the willow and the insects hum.

I will not stay here long. It is hot  
and eventually my spirit will feel  
like that butterfly creature dashing itself  
against the screen.

There wasn't much sun today.  
Marshmallow clouds met and joined  
in a steely, unwavering gray,  
making a kind of net for this world.

But the birds  
are flying across the lawn,  
sporadically alighting, vigilant, proud,  
on the backs of the chairs here, oh, and

the grass is growing tall in the meadow  
while the sunset-winged gull  
makes its way back  
to lake or sea, it will not tell.

I don't get tired of this.  
The earth is old,  
old and spinning  
fast or slow, it is all

relative. At night the moon  
will rise again  
and we will step out in our slippers  
to see it.

Should we be grieving nature's end  
or fighting to postpone it...  
The night is a lullaby.  
The bats' erratic flight's invisible

against the dusk, silent in the hush,  
with all the creatures we can and cannot see  
from here—the screened in porch, I mean—  
belonging, flitting, fitting in,

descending, ascending, flapping, soaring,  
occasionally howling, part of all that  
is and ever shall be  
world without end, we hope,

amen.