

## Orsino and Pine

I cut myself with a knife  
picking out the bark of oak.  
I bled, left a jagged heart.  
In the middle I put our initials. The tree  
disagreed with the statement;  
it had a lot more growing to do.  
The heart would make that heavy.  
I wanted it to be ours, but who am I  
to burden one so beautiful as a tree?  
I left it there, a gift I could not reclaim.  
And it grew hard and black until  
I had to cut it down. Our initials,  
this is what we do to trees.

## Nymphaeaceae

She sits just above the waterline  
graceful on the surface rides  
the ripples, waves, sometimes  
finds herself smiling for no reason.

A boy admires her color &  
desires to see her closer &  
a stick to pull her further to  
the bank; now she is broken

## Things left in a basement

Bicycles twice replaced, the replacements,  
the box of church fans promoting funeral homes,  
the lightly used Nordic Track and dumbbells,  
a half-eaten sandwich even ants will not bother,  
the chair you blamed your brother for breaking,  
the belt your father would use before  
you hid it beneath stacks of unread literature,  
college textbooks, a bible, boxes of outgrown clothing,  
old light bulbs and batteries and glassware,  
the floor model television, VCR tapes, her chair,  
the hat Granny would wear to church, the obituary,  
the plastic flowers arrested in full bloom and  
still full of something not quite like life,  
the birdcage never lived in, the luggage well used,  
fraternity tee shirts, your single black brick,  
a shoe box stuffed with love letters,  
more with broken poems, hearts, stories,  
everywhere stories half written, half lived,  
forgotten, and all the notebooks, all the frames  
they've all been placed inside

Written on a gum wrapper when she arrived back from Chicago

These words cannot properly tell you just  
how much I missed you saying, Bear,  
you call me that every now & then,  
Bear, you're smacking loud and  
everyone can hear you chew,  
and you touch my jaw  
just for a moment  
and my heart,  
it runs out  
of room

## Out for milk

A little girl on her tiptoes is waiting at the  
window for her Daddy to come home from work  
nightly she fogs the glass yawning  
writes in it, plays with her reflection  
the glass laughs at the girl, her nose is cold  
especially when she presses it against the pane  
the television and her half-brother are snoring  
one a soft and scratchy rumble, the other is a lion  
she wonders what is keeping him there  
if he too gets afraid of all the noise  
or we are playing a game of hide and seek,  
she shuts her eyes and starts counting  
maybe you are like a kite string, the breeze  
has pulled you away & I am chasing after you  
maybe, she is such an exhausting word  
the girl on her tiptoes, maybe every night