

Mothers

They set their GPS to ghetto-avoid, but one day a girl in the projects made that her hot wire project. Suddenly their BMWs brought them here.

Blinkety blink, squint eyed, blue light disbelief — the police put those lights so close to our homes. We don't need night lights. The moon glow

shone on their skin and they counted us all up. Gold-hooped goodness, we flanked in rank and stared back. National Geographic special.

Long after they had forgotten about this city, we had stitched down the streets and kept them from rolling back into the earth.

We grew the concrete roses and lettuce leaves
Vacuumed up the moon dust, cloud tears
Counted up the houses, the children, the ghosts

We were the records, artifacts, historians,
the proof of the civilization that once was here.
They ran to the shiny, the easy. We held our

elders' hands and closed their eyelids. To pioneer is to achieve. To patchwork is to be poor. Hundred years ago, we were the umbrella capital of the world.

Stand close, this looks like a skeleton. But once I open its canopy, you will see how well it keeps the rain off that nice leather coat.

Daughters

In the backyard of her rowhouse between heirlooms
and black-eyed she grew the mold that became vaccine.

Tiny nothing becomes something becomes indispensable.
How did we survive before? Ambition is always the brightest
star on days into nights into days, laboratories, hospital wards
tech startups, prize money. The New Entrepreneur!

Blink-eyed, caffeine-fired. When she paused to breathe
the city's thin air, it was good. Elbow to elbow, she told him
her story over gin and showed him the medals, trophies, statues
of glory, rings of honor, certificates, papers, prizes, his fingerprints
lingering. It was too much, he said in gold-filled gold tone. Too much
for just one girl, his voice still smiled.

In her black night back yard she noticed the burn-out
bulb of sky light and scaled the roof to change out the stars.

Last thoughts

Like a movie, the gangsters burst in as
her love was about to change
his face/his trade/their life.

They pray to the patron saint of petrol.
But how can a baby stand guard over a man
who bleeds pipelines, carries grenades?

And what kind of hubris does it take
to cut away the cheekbones of ancestors?
Spade to rock and red clay soil

under the nails forever, it stains flesh.
Tattoos the heart, the priest says;
Blood doesn't go back in the body.

She was considering the way
the rain falls in the desert and that
she wished to be that: rain

Even in his sleep, his hand was on her,
gun always ready, this was what it was like to
be needed, to be more indelible than fingerprints.

Now they say Mary Magdalene was
an apostle and not a whore; but she
has always known this to be true.

Of this and other things she will never be asked
Blood spent, martyred, accessorized, dismissed.
We always ask the wrong questions to the wrong people.

ted koppel warned us

the attack will be soundless
our gasps the only commotion
what we think is the draining of our souls
is the last bars of our cell phones

how many batteries do we need?
how many protein bars?

they say 9 months the gestation of a child
no lights no tv no alexa no atm

will we cannibal our suburbs to heat our homes
with ikea shelves? guard our particle board and
generators with bared teeth and guns?

when my girl was a baby i had to hold
her upright in the night so she wouldn't choke
tiny body one mother night's deep pocket

i thought of my grandmother then, cycles of life
she still hid money in the ceiling joints even
after the great depression ended

she would tell us now to trust ted

i want to believe her i want to believe we will
play cards by candlelight and turn our sod lawns
into thickets of sweet pea while we wait for the army