

Translation

I

hold steady
turn sharp
sudden down

Your

still tongue
wants push
trigger snap

Our

lips cycle
drawn slow
shadows shake

We

flicker kiss
skim dark
up break.

Family Portrait: May 15, 1966

After church, we remain in our Sunday best,
the weather warm enough
sticking my hair in curl.
Mama insists on taking our picture -
her impatiens backyard-bright.

She poses us garage and alley framed.
My sister wants to stand the closest
to the flowers, her dress petals around her waist.
I take the other side. Mama says
my navy jumper will block thick
in the black and white photograph.

My father stands in between, his arms
scroll flat upon our backs.
My upturned face forces
the side of his suit coat against his chest.

Mama calls my name.

I look at my father looking at her.
His cheeks balloon round in grin.
His chin doubles like dough.

Eve

Once, we sifted

pieces of the sea
and our ears sank into shells.

I listened for you
emerging
from the phantasms leaning
tracing

the patina of our skin.

I knew you.

Once, our hanging limbs
teased the dark, like the moon
under

a cloud of tulle

shifting shape
until our sounds

let go

and made sense.

We have fallen

a long way.

Wasn't it grace

that broke the bone?

Was it a miracle of shaping
stone

into my flesh -

of turning tides

hands covering my face
arms hiding my chest

turning me inside

occupy

rocked so tight, I

no space?

Wasn't I just an experiment?

To see if life could be given
handed
created
made

over
again?

I know

the afterthought of wanting
to let go. It's easier

than forgetting
than pretending

your earth
move
hurt
howl

doesn't
doesn't
doesn't

underneath.

I can't help but stand

still with

*the grasses unloading their
griefs on my feet*

as if I were

you.

And now, after all
of this, isn't it grace
that we both know

this mud will one day turn
back into dust?

God of our Own Creation

My mother's hand routinely divides potatoes.
Scraps, high in yesterday's oil, drop spit
harsh and sputter. She dips and skims
until flattened clouds glisten on our plates.

We sit and wait. Each scrape
of my father's knife
and poke of fork
inhales the breath out of us.

Hunger-hollowed, he pushes
away light, spin breaking
an artificial moon over our heads.

Our legs bend in descending angles.
Kneeling on an explosion of constellations,
our syllables repeat over each other
giving teeth to a god of our creation.

Our hands fill with stars.