

beating hearts

In the stillness a newborn cries as his grandfather falters
in a hospital bed. We hold our breath as he breathes,
make ourselves small so that there is more room for his eyelids
to sleep. The gravitation of morbidity keeps us strung to his
knees; we roll film against our tongues, white flashing into red
as we imitate lawless sound. The pantomime of an exhumation:
an old woman's heart caved in, the blackened blue of a side-walk
bruise, the coin-bright flash of a car as it tramples the white of pianos.
In the waiting room we roll rust over one knuckle and naivete over the other;
we are too young for bottled candor, too old to ask our mothers
for the truth and hope for a happy ending. The only thing worth
listening to is movement; the rustle of our eyelashes as we flee in first light.
Never before have we known this kind of grief, the tear-tracks
of these exit wounds, the search for a cadence in the bedrock of hope.
And still, *baozi* in tinfoil trays, the balanced succor of Friday evenings,
shared with every bird who has ever loved a memory enough to keep coming
home. We wring laughter from our hair, early kisses from the evening
light, pulpit ourselves in the safety of eyesight. Within this sheltered safety,
we ripen sunlight with pear-bodies. Here, there is only the dawning
of orioles, bird-blossomed. We soften ochre in our hands, and let it rest.