

Crowning Bower

My mother braids my hair back every night,
we are a hairy sort of people,
she pinches that slope from my neck to my shoulder if I am moving too much,
she combs me open. My mother is a very fervent sort of person.
She folds me over. She tucks me up into the cupboard.

When she is feeling softer, she decorates me with little chocolates and beads,
tiny ornaments hung from my eyelashes, kisses and sliced fruit.

My mother tells me, once,
before I learn to read, that she knows I think we would all be better off without her.
She spits it at me. I wonder how she found out.

My hair is a seam down my spine. I am always hiding in that cupboard. I can't open my eyes.

My mother teaches me nothing. I bloody myself, again and again.
My mother teaches me how to swim at sea. She tosses me over the waves
into grey water, traps me in that whirling ribcage,
and I come up, sputtering
and begging her to do it again.

I am reading my mother's face at all times. Every hill is her grave. When she is drunk,
she tells me she knows I wish she were dead. She's wrong, this time.

My mother brings me home when I arrive on the train, again and again.
She greets me with my favorite supper, again and again.

I am a hairy sort of person. My mother says she taught me how to have my hair.