

Our Lethal Females

You wash stones beside a gray river,
caress the false rock, convinced they are not agates
but a prophecy the mountains birthed.

You ask, what are these bruised
currents between us?

We are bound by tremulous necessities.
Poems and children and lapis beads
from inland seas where our daughters
float unborn and forgotten,
even the murdered ones.
Drowned accidents. Dye your hair
blond and move to another village.

They return in October in a colossus
of bells and Saturday ferries
with names like hurricanes and ships.
Our lethal females, our river spawn,
wearing our pearls and gloves.
Highways expand like smoke.

They want answers.
They think we know.

It's an autumn of catalysts,
beginnings and desertions.
We are washing up on shore.
We are in the auburn reeds and gravel.
We are the bank of mud, sediment and strata.
We are the interlude of silence.

Once, watching Northern Lights
above Gastineau Channel in Juno
the air smelled of ice and infant stars.
I thought of you for six hours.

It's always midnight in Utah and Wyoming.
We open our mouths in raw dark to a startled
round collision that is nothing like screaming.
It is the sudden fusion of black iris
and agitated hawks inventing a singular
minimal dialect of brute survival.

I'll cut to the chase. In autumn we gather
our alternative selves and burn them
arms and ash, limb into limb
and pretend we are warm.