

Spring 2019

Reckoning

Scarlett Peterson
scarlett.peterson@gcsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://kb.gcsu.edu/poetry>

Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Peterson, Scarlett, "Reckoning" (2019). *Poetry MFA Theses*. 4.
<https://kb.gcsu.edu/poetry/4>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Masters of Fine Arts Theses at Knowledge Box. It has been accepted for inclusion in Poetry MFA Theses by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Box.

Reckoning

A thesis presented to
The Graduate Faculty of
The College of Arts and Sciences
Department of English
Georgia College & State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Scarlett Peterson
April 2019

Reckoning

by

Scarlett Peterson

Approved:



Professor Laura Newbern, Chair, Thesis Committee

April 22, 2019.
Date



Professor Cecilia Woloch, Committee Member

4/22/2019
Date



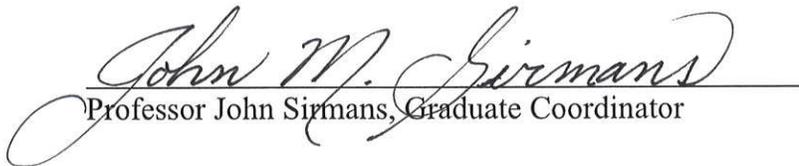
Dr. Hali Sofala-Jones, Committee Member

4-22-2019
Date



Dr. Marshall Bruce Gentry, Committee Member

22 April 2019
Date



Professor John Sirmans, Graduate Coordinator

04/22/2019
Date



Dr. Eric G. Tenbus
Dean, School of Liberal Arts & Sciences

4-22-2019
Date

Acknowledgements

The following poems appeared in the indicated journals in this or an earlier draft:

“Moscato Poem” *Five 2 One Magazine*

“Grace” *Pennsylvania English*

“The Cook” *Ink and Nebula*

“When My Face Was in the Leaves Somewhere Off Wellston Trail, Within Earshot of a Playground” *Fire Poetry*

“Dismemberment” *Moon City Review*

“In Private” *Cosmonauts Avenue*

Contents

I Do Not Have Wings	1
I. My Mother's Face	2
Blackberries	3
Night Bloom	4
In Response to Sappho	5
Lonely Poem	6
Nulligravida Sonnet	7
Back Roads	8
Grace	9
Elegy for a Second Mother	11
Ode to the Watermelon	12
Elegy for Dada	13
The Cook	17
Homeland	18
Isaiah 66:13	19
II. How I Know My Father	20
My Father's Mother	21
Nana's Apple Cake	22
The Sainting of Dymphna	24
Ode to My Father	26
Drawing the Cardinal	27

I Need to Say	28
Reckoning	29
What Would You Say If You Could?	30
III. When In Love	31
The Shape of My Body	32
Wanting Heat Ghazal	33
Mercy	34
When My Face Was In the Leaves Somewhere Off Wellston Trail...	35
Moscato Poem	36
In Private	37
Flooding	38
Suede Poem	40
Leaving	41
Dismemberment	42
Mortality Poem	43
Birthday Aubade	44
Worry Poem	45
John 1:12	46
Nocturne and Dog Bite	47

I Do Not Have Wings

I am deciding, today, how it will feel to be disowned.

A black and blue butterfly has just landed in paint run-off
from the small house. The house and the grass are all the color
of a robin's egg,

or maybe a chicken's.

Our chickens lay
that shade of blue and brown. Houseflies shine blue-green
in the sun and

vomit every time they land.

One of our hens flies over the coop's fence every afternoon,
which is no great distance to a housefly,
but still all that a hen can manage.

I should have to travel soon.

I. My Mother's Face

Night Bloom

I am a moonflower in a family of morning glories.
I sleep through the morning, tire myself out with laziness,
wake with sore bones in the night.

Morning glories sleep through the night like people,
like well-trained infants.

I want to curl my sleeping stem around another
and see if maybe we're both fertile,
if we can germinate or pollinate and
bring a new shade of moonflower to bloom.

In Response to Sappho

*“...and I have flown,
like a little girl
in search of her mother.”*

Where Sappho is concerned,
I was the daughter
 newly alone
and searching, flying after her,
mother, through pine forests—
hoping turpentine might numb
the beating wound of my
empty womb,
 while I was orphaned.

I think back to three years ago,
motherless in her absence.

How did she manage,
no children for miles?

She were more than a mother,
and I was more than the first child
to live.

She has run a thousand times
and only taught me how to follow.

Why did I go looking for her?

If I had looked sooner,
who might I have found?

Lonely Poem

Would I be happier as a bastard?
Send me an obvious shame,
one as old-fashioned
as the christ-child's,
one a mother can teach her child
not to ache from.

Nulligravida Sonnet

I am afraid of losing the baby that I haven't made
and afraid of losing the woman I will make it with.

I probably want two children, though hard limits fade.
I want the love affair to be swift,

to be on the path to pregnancy soon.
How does a woman find a mate?

I want to fold in on myself, form a mammalian cocoon
and emerge as two beings, one grown, one in infant state

without the screaming and the pushing. Soon
I will be better educated, able to compose strong

verse, able to argue myself a decent poet, but who
will I have to sing to? And what song

would a small body like to hear?
Will I bury my baby, or will she have an open ear?

after Jenny Sadre-Orafai

Back Roads

always back roads
when there's an eight ball of meth
in the glove compartment.

Mama married a man who didn't make money honest.
So I rode in the backseat, tan leather,
to get home
to the house with the stream out back
that ran thick
with ticks
in the summer—

the house where my homeschool textbooks went unused,
half of fifth grade gone without a lesson
while Mama grew another body in hers
and I learned to make breakfast alone every morning—
bacon, eggs, Mickey Mouse pancakes from scratch.

I was the only one up by noon
in the house with that stream out back breeding
those small brown beads that bit my young chest
as I sat on the floor of my bedroom
watching from the open door—

Across the hall my stepfather,
too high to remember,
slung Mama into the bed frame,
her belly full of cold breakfast
and his baby.

Grace

I.

She is standing in the same place at the beginning of the story as she is at the end.

II.

Her feet are strongly planted, gracing fern green kitchen floor with the lightly soiled soles of her seven-year-old feet while she learns to scramble eggs.

III.

Here she is sitting, helping peel potatoes and cube them, the barstool too tall to let her feet touch the floor, low enough that they hang to just the bottom rung.

IV.

Here she is learning to season delicate fingerling peas with bacon or ham hock— the teacher has replaced the floor with a wood look-alike. Still, their feet are firmly planted.

V.

Here she learns the shortcuts. Boxed cake mixes aren't a sin unless you can't manage to dress them up, dumplings need not be from scratch, it's all in the slow simmered chicken. Granulated sugar is an odd sensation under her feet— she can no longer wear the same size shoe as the teacher.

VI.

She has begun to bake with a fervor, placing pecans in intricate designs atop pies before she bakes them, watching cakes rise through the oven window as she crouches on the same floor in the same kitchen.

VII.

There are fewer visits to the kitchen now— the teacher is aging, the student is away at a different kind of school. The kitchen is deserted of feet.

VIII.

The student returns to aid the teacher whose memory has failed her— student cooks the same three things every week— chicken (whole) cooked until the broth is rich, deboned and shredded into the same pot, floating among onion and carrot (for vitamins) shortcut dumplings torn and thrown in, butter-beans seasoned with ham, baked sweet potatoes, and sometimes banana bread.

IX.

There is no teacher now. The student stands in the kitchen serving food brought by friends and family; it is the offering for mourning.

X.

The student doesn't want to leave the kitchen but the teacher asks; *Who taught you to cook like this? Please, come, sit and eat with me.*

Elegy for a Second Mother

I sped home from Atlanta when she was dying—
afraid at every lull in traffic that I'd miss goodbye.
In a few months she'd have been ninety,

I was only twenty-one and weeping.

The hospice parking lot lead to birdhouses
and flowering bushes planted in memory—
and memory she had lost.

Two weeks had passed since I found her
on the floor in the morning;
with her memory had gone the early mornings,

and I, fresh from college, had grown accustomed
to rising first, brewing her coffee, and waiting.
This was my life's greatest pause, this

eight months before graduate school,
and finding her, finding her on the floor
was my life's sharpest exhale.

If I could have fit her in my arms,
I'd have carried her to God.

In the hospice bed, the last thing she said
was her simple greeting when I came in—
her face turned, beaming, saying *Hello*.

Ode to the Watermelon

in my grandfather's hand
while we waded in the shallow end
of his too-shaded pool.

I did not know then
the value of a melon
thick-rinded and round.

I did not know then
how I would miss
the old knife he carried,
ready to slice apple,
pear, fig, melon.

I only knew how well
a quarter of melon fit
into my open hands.

after Pablo Neruda

Elegy for Dada

I.

My maternal grandfather left two acres
of fig, pear, and apple trees
in foreclosure.

Style	One Family
Heated Square Feet	3,872
Interior Walls	Sheetrock
Exterior Walls	Masonry (brick)
Condition	Poor

Didn't he die that way?

In the back two sheds and a workshop
full of tools he'd spray-painted
in red, yellow, and blue.

II.

Da-Da. Dada.

The sound a child makes for father.

None of us had one at home for long,
so he got the name instead.

III.

My grandmother found him,
twenty-five years post divorce,
with no wife to catch his fall
and told the paramedics
try and revive him.

Later she said

I should have let him go.

IV.

He died for a ham that no one wanted to cook,

probably with his phone in his hand, calling
from the freezer where he fell.

It took him five months
from that fall to his last breath,
days off the ventilator.

I wasn't there for it.

V.
The day they made the decision
I was showering at a lover's house.

When my cousin called to say
they were cutting off life support
I crawled into the lap of the man
I thought I was in love with
and put my mouth on his.

VI.
My aunt couldn't let the land go,
but my mother had no choice—

Before the bank took it back, Mama sent me on
one last mission to clear her father's name;

The rumors about underage girls were true,
she said.

search the file cabinets
two in the shed, three in the upstairs office,
more in the bedroom,
make sure there are no photos left.

Someone must have beat me to it.
The photos,
if they were still there when he died, were gone.

They did not go into the burn pile
with old mattresses and stacks of boxes ruined

when the basement flooded.

Mama couldn't go herself, she'd been disowned.

VII.

Walking around the civil rights museum
three years after he was buried
I remember Dada swearing
that the government killed
Martin Luther King Jr.
and that he'd had some part in it.

We could never tell for sure what was true.

Mama found him in the drained pool
one afternoon after he'd fallen in.

VIII.

If he'd known me to be a lesbian,
he'd have hated me.

*Tell your grandmother I heard
about the hairdresser,
and I'm sorry for her loss,
pity he's in hell now.*

He said it like he knew God.

IX.

Sitting at his bedside I heard
him beg us to let him die.

X.

I would have.

XI.

I believe we die like we live.

XII.

He always said his funeral would be packed

full of people checking to make sure he'd really died.

The pews sat half empty,
his eldest brother said

Well, he wasn't my favorite brother...

and we listened to them sing.

The Cook

Working as a waitress I met an elderly man who reminded me of my late grandfather. This man, like Dada, shows his love with food. He hefts the wok and slings vegetables in ginger sauce, serves round mounds of fried rice in small bowls, then waits for a lull in orders to slice taro root with a mandolin, saving small chunks to make a sweet stew while my hands, ever eager, grab the chips that he fries straight away. Small donuts float in the top of the stew, fried dough in a lavender blend of root, sugar, sauce. He reminds me of Dada, though he couldn't cook and never learned, even after Nana left him. He grew fruit trees: apples, pears, figs, muscadine vines (one was named for me). I remember his walk, much like the cook's; how they both hunch forward while setting their hips too far back, posture like an unused bow. How they both wear thick-soled shoes, shuffle their feet, and smile with brown eyes. When the cook sets out a metal serving bowl I see Dada turning out a brown paper bag of figs;

their milky stems make
spots on the counter; I eat
as much as I can

Homeland

*I'd rather give you this now,
I don't want to wait until I'm dead
to hand things down, she says,
handing me a crystal dish.*

*Take these too, if you want them.
They were her father's
everyday dishes— white Corelle,
stronger than an old man's skull.*

We walk to the front yard
of her father's house,
three fig trees in a line
next to the highway.
The closest to the road are ripest—

the deepest shade of purple.
She closes her eyes
says *thank you, Daddy,*
as the fruit touches her lips.

Isaiah 66:13

*As the mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you;
and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.*

I.

But I was not comforted by the mother
as the child.

It was as though my father's hands wrapped
around the whole wide world
to cover her mouth—

II.

like when he took me, twice,
and she decided that outside
was too dangerous.

III.

How could she stop to say that we,
among the burning
would be safe?

IV.

I was never the child.
I was the ghost calling my soft questions
in the darkest black of night
from behind the door.

V.

Who has taught me suffering,
and who made her suffer first?

II. How I Know My Father

My Father's Mother
for Sandra Drake

We played chess when she was dying
in the living room of my aunt's trailer.
It must have been lung cancer;
she wore the first cannula I'd ever seen
and smoked too near the oxygen tank.

I knew nothing about chess, or dying—
at six, each turn she taught me was an eternity.
I wondered how the game could be fair
when she knew every trick I was learning.

In the front yard, my horse was penned, cantering,
no body on her back. I wanted nothing more
than to ride her, bareback like my father taught me,
to leave the game behind. I wanted no knights,
only my palomino. There was no time
for riding that day.

I see the horse's mane in my memories,
my last day with either of them—

I see the horse clearer than I see
my grandmother: her hair, dyed brown like mine,
her glasses, the eyes behind them.

Nana's Apple Cake

It was Thanksgiving, early,
the only one I had with my father—
small, just Mom, Dad, the kids, an aunt and her sons.

Mom and I cooked all day,
the aunt brought an apple cake, a family recipe
from the family I barely knew.

My mother's family would have called it
a yankee recipe, built around a northern apple—
the McIntosh, inspiration to a technological legacy,
but first, an ingredient.

She gave me the recipe,
one I didn't bake for nearly a decade—

3 cups chopped McIntosh apples
2 cups sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon nutmeg

Stir every thirty minutes for two hours.

Preheat the oven to 350.

In another bowl combine

1 cup Wesson oil
3 cups self-rising flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 eggs
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup raisins
1 cup chopped walnuts

The batter is wetted mostly with juice
pulled from the apples. They sit weeping

on the counter while the oven warms.

Combine the two bowls and bake in a buttered, floured bundt pan for one hour. Sprinkle with sugar.

It bakes dark and sweet,
dense as a family line.

The Sointing of Dymphna

I.

They pray to me,
men like my father.
Their daughters, too.

II.

Mother left us, withered
to nothing, died young,
long before they called me lilly.

We were King and princess
devoid of our queen, save my face,
so much like hers.

III.

Father went mad, not with Power
like most Kings, but Grief.

The courtiers suggested marriage,
a balm—

 he agreed, only
so long as his new bride
was a mirror to his first.

IV.

I was there, her mirror,
his daughter, with nothing to do
but run.

V.

I took the ship,
stole my worth in gold
from a father gone mad—

In Geel, I built a reason to heal,

a hospital,

but trade caught us,
the gold was traced
seven-hundred miles
and he followed me,
my rabid father

found me again,
found his wife's face,
found my mother
behind my clover eyes.

VI.
God spoke to me.

VII.
I would not go back to Ireland,
back to madness
at only fifteen.

Father gave me a choice:
come home or die.

I fought him, my
disobedience
pleased the Lord—

dying fashioned my soul
into a saint's,
patron to victims of incest
and the mentally ill,
my freedom gone with my head.

VIII.
When the poet looks
in the mirror she sees
her mother's face.

Ode to My Father

The way that spit gathers in the corners of your mouth—
that is how you taught me to love:
with gaps, bits of substance
as insubstantial as sputum,
the sign of a need for water
or a good cleaning.

Father, you have set the bar impressively low.
I spent ten years looking for a man like you—

I slept next to them naked, two dozen men
made their way into my bed
before I realized each one of them was you,
your hard eyes,
your dark hair,
your crooked bastard smile.

I learned how to leave them, father,
and you, in my wake.

Drawing the Cardinal

On the floor of the lawyer's office
my father tried to teach me how to draw
by penning a grid over a cardinal
in some magazine. He'd brought
an art set, the figurine of a ballerina
dancing, guided by her guardian
angel, and patience.

I told the lawyer, later, alone,
that yes, I do love my Daddy,
even though Mommy says
I'm not supposed to. I cry
so loud that she hears me
down the hall, doesn't speak
to me for hours.

I Need to Say

I cannot make it beautiful with a metaphor.
It is hardly a poem,
just a memory, an image that won't die
even when he does.

I am five, maybe younger,
at the foot of my father's bed.
Custody lawyers have made it
so we're in his best friend's house.

I am too young for this.
I do not know why a man
puts his face between a woman's legs,
but my father has done it to me.

I tell my mother in smaller words:
Daddy kissed me here.

Soon the crisis center worker
points to cartoon bodies,
asking *what is this called?*
And this? And this?
What about this part of a man?

I make up names again and again.
I don't know the right words yet.
I don't know anything at all.

Reckoning

I am thinking,
this morning,
about reckoning
and what it means:
a decision,
a judgement,
a settlement of debts.

There are men in the south
obsessed with reckoning,
the day of it
they say is coming.

To my family
in the deep south
it means to think,
but I reckon
I have more
than one family.

My birth certificate tells me
my father was born in Michigan.

I haven't heard him speak in years,
but I reckon that to be my choice.

What does reckoning mean
to a man like my father?

What Would You Say If You Could?

I would say fifteen.
Say before all of the men,
before any of them became the father.

I would send away the father earlier.

I would say to love the women,
not the men.

Say, there is a cliché for this, somewhere.

Maybe there are birds too,
blue like forgiveness,
wings beating against whatever wants them to fall.

after Bhanu Kapil

III. When In Love

The Shape of My Body

My body
is a wafer
in the mouth—

softened,
shapeless,

sometimes
 holy.

My body
made of suffering.

My hands
clean of scars.

No salvation
in sight.

Wanting Heat Ghazal

Tell me, am I the moth or the flame? Am I burned in my wanting
Or untouchable for my heat? I could almost cry wanting—

I want more time in every day to learn, to write something
meaningful. I ache every night for something, for a new, dry heat.

Every lover I've touched has left me, I could die alone
and leave them all wild with wondering if I had died wanting.

There aren't wings on my body, I cannot fly to soothe myself.
I might die like Icarus, aimed for God, falling from sky's heat.

When I leave this world I will be finished with suffering, I'll
leave you aching in my absence, looking to the sky, wanting.

Sing the injured syllables of my name: Scar-lett, you
won't expect the burning, slow simmering of wanting, my heat.

after Carol Muske-Dukes

Mercy

You will find his photos on a long night
while waiting for a storm to pass—

You have forgotten his glasses,
his white t-shirts.

You keep the photos.

The dog you liked best is posed in bed
beside him.

You ponder the red tint to his beard,
remember how it felt against your young thighs
while your knuckles were white on the headboard,
while your body was a cherry tree, rooted in his mouth.

When My Face Was in the Leaves Somewhere Off Wellston Trail, Within Earshot of a
Playground

It was a park
in the middle of a day.

There was no gun, no knife.
I did not fear for my life.

It was simple:
if I had screamed,
a child could have come running.

I did not have the right.

Moscato Poem

You called it cloying.
Too sweet like I was too loud,
too light like my hair was too curly.

I opened a bottle of cab.
Straightened my hair,
Stopped embarrassing you with my laugh.

In Private

The dog has wet the bed again,
an act of dominance,
not an accident.
She sees closed doors as accusation,
waits until I am bathing.
I am strong she says,
squats over the center of fresh sheets.

Friends say *pin her down*,
and *don't hurt her*.
It's for her own good, they say,
for the good of your bed.

I must get on her level,
hold snout to carpet,
say *I am in charge*,
you are not in charge,
I am in charge,
you are not in charge,
I am in charge,
you are not in charge,
I am in charge,
I am in charge.

Flooding

I.

I'm convinced that it rained all day
and all night just to keep me from showing
her the fishing hole I found
along the Oconee a week before the last day
we were together.

I call it divine intervention.

God knowing I had given too much of myself
to her already, telling me
she didn't deserve any more.

The whole park flooded but
we stopped along the street,
got out of the car.

Isn't that how we loved?

She said the flooding didn't matter,
that she wouldn't have put her body
in the murk, that she didn't like to
get in unclean water.

She was frightened
of the uncertainty,
of whatever could be
swimming close by,
I think, or perhaps
that she might be lost.

The Oconee flows rapid
even without flood water,
the quick tear of the current
could have pulled us both under.

II.

And when the water was not enough for her
I led her to the brush.

A month past Easter we found a half dozen plastic eggs
posed, in the goldenrod. They shone
pink, blue, and silver from their glitter coating.

When I opened each one I expected an answer,
and found it empty.

She said we shouldn't keep an egg,
she didn't want to remember the day.

III.

She stayed back a dozen yards,
wouldn't get within arm's reach.

IV.

I left her sitting half an hour
at a picnic table,
asked her to find me in the woods,
and she did,
without getting the message.

Suede Poem

Her fingers feel like dead skin softened,
my hand on her knee feels at home,
the backseat a new haven for two women
lost and tender, raw as sugarcane
in the south Georgia summer.

Leaving

On a walk along the river
I map out a conversation
with the woman still in love with me.

I've been considering drowning
to leave her again.

In my mind she says it's my voice
she'll miss the most.

I tell her,
when the time comes,
when they find me floating—
take my phone,
find the recordings.

Early in the morning,
my voice waking-thick.

On a long drive,
Atlanta traffic in the background.

At the end of the night,
my voice heavy with the pull
of sleep.

When I leave this world
like Ophelia, hands
full of flowers,
look for the messages.

Dismemberment

I'd like you better split in two—
half the body I grew used to holding
mine alone—
the other half hers,
and never within reach.

Half of you, like that baby in the bible,
and I the selfish woman
with no child of her own,
willing to let you be torn apart
for me—

so that, in the end
you won't go home to her, either.

I would go before the king and say
I earned this love,
and I'll bury what's left.

Mortality Poem

Someday I'll be gone, and you'll be wading through my shit.
I could make a game of it, throw away one thing for every two I keep.
We lose so much in our lives;
names, parents, white china plates, old leather skirts.
I decide what to keep on a Monday.
I'd choose differently in a week's time.
I discard things quickly—
Take a trunk full of boxes to Goodwill,
push the bin to the curb.

Push the bin to the curb.
Take a trunk full of my boxes to Goodwill.
Discard things quickly,
you'd choose differently in a week's time.
Decide what to keep on a Monday:
names, parents, white china plates, old leather skirts.
I lost so much in my life.
You could make a game of it, throw away one thing for every two you keep.
Today I'm gone, and you're left, wading through.

Birthday Aubade

Today she is twenty-eight
and I am washing her hair
with two gallons of distilled water
because our pipes have been empty
since yesterday morning.

She crouches beside the tub,
head held over its rim.
I kneel beside her,
plastic jug in hand.

Half a gallon for the wetting,
two pumps of shampoo,
my fingers on her scalp,
scratching and lathering—
another gallon
to rinse her clean.

Later, in bed, my hands are dry,
rough from the shampoo, and I consider how
I'd never have washed her hair this morning
if her ex hadn't shut off the water.

I watch her leave from the front porch,
stand there in a shirt and underwear,
exposed in the half light.

When I wake again, the faucets still don't run.

Worry Poem

I wake and tell the pine trees that I, too, sway with the wind, that I, too, worry about my brittle trunk, how it might snap and I might find myself flat among the blades of grass. I tell them that I worry about the parasites. I drop needles of myself all around, strands of hair on a lover's pillow, discarded clothes on the floor of hotel bathrooms. I tell the pine trees that I worry that I don't provide enough shade, that I might one day be unable to stay green, that one day my roots will decompose and no one will know where I stood, how tall I was, how many hatchlings became fledglings among my branches.

John 1:12

I never thought that God hated the gays,
not even as a small child, hands on a pastel bible
in the pews of a Baptist church.

I knew Him before I knew myself,

His hands
big enough to hold every love I'd ever have.

My fingers interlaced in prayer, I learned to sit back,
listened until I became a wide-eyed woman in the throes
of sex with men I could never love,

each of them a test
I failed,
each of them my running from myself.

Each with a face made by God.

I thought that God taught me how to love,
so I let my lovers test me the way He had,
faithful that I would be better for my suffering in the end.

Even sitting in the crooks of their open laps, I have never loved men,
and I have never been weak.

I have come to hear myself, bottlenose dolphin in the creek,
calling for love with a woman in the kingdom of God.

Nocturne and Dog Bite

I.

What is the night without a fresh hole in my hand?

I have never seen this house empty—
I didn't choose it from a listing.

They all look the same in the dark,
which we run from like it's painful.

How often is the sky called a bruise—
a deep pit in the skin, a tooth mark.

It is blood in a burst vessel, unspilled.

II.

You can see it in the black dog's eyes
when she is sorry.

I have not learned to forgive.