

Poem after Four Months of Silence

The first fluency
 has left me. Sex has
 acquired history.
I grow afraid of
 repeating myself
 unknowingly. Love,
new man, old enemy,
 you enclose me with
 your mouth. Go slowly.

Don't Go, Sweet Mother

Once I was the most beautiful rose in my mother's rose garden.
But now he has plucked me, and in his hands I am wilting.

“Edes Anyam,” Hungarian bridal lament

Don't go, sweet Mother,
don't open your hands

like spring flowers,
like the sun,

hands that wrung
the curtains dry.

When did *mother* mean
losing a child?

The day you planted
the first roses?

The day you taught me
to say *please*?

Your face is a fist
but I am not in it.

*

White voice, secret signal,
unreadable days,

moonless night,
hollow between the hills—

I name him

to make him familiar.

Not husband,
the name others give.

It touches nothing
in my ears,

except
the fear

of being disappointing
and disappointed.

*

Goodbye, bent kettle,
to your shining ditty,

old clock, goodbye,
my knowing friend,

pink tiles, sunset
to the feet, goodbye,

goodbye, high cot,
crazy quilt, good-bye,

goodbye, bay window,
stop looking out for me,

girls in wool pullovers
they knitted in the fall,

boys brown in the neck
and in the arms.

The Dream Child

—so what will Baby/be tomorrow?—

Antonia Pozzi, “The Dreamed Life”

Who speaks to me speaks
to a stir—
in air, a ripple
of veil—perhaps—
speaking
caused the ripple,
hard to tell.

*

But body is sensed—
joy—as possibility,
everything small
but perfect,
toes,
lips capable
of taking
ravishment—giving.

*

They walk
the woods as others
make love,
the man who
will be sent away
to Rome,

the girl who will lean
back on grass—
trembling
until the slight wind
drops.

*

These children—not theirs—
take up so much space.
They tug, they push.
They stride ahead, expecting the world
to give way.
Even when they tumble,
they cover
ground.

I watch behind the elm
and step out—
a shadow.

*

Only when I open
my throat—
to call, to hiss—
do I
occupy
a place,
as when the sound
of the sea takes up the room
of a shell,
or when sky is skylark.

*

In their rage,
the dead break
things—soup bowls,
flour mills.
I can see
them, foreheads
burning,
but they can't
see—the unborn.

They think they are
looking at a loaf
of fire, water
becoming soup.

*

Whatever else
I am, I am
the earth-clod
on which my parents step
together, her feet
on his feet.

Her fingers weave
between his fingers
like ropes
around a raft.

White wisps—
on a second
look—join
as cloud
and sail off.

I am
left behind.

*

My young mother, my young corpse,
black album
of images—I stroke:
girl graduate,
political meetings,
Alpine flowers,
gay ribbons.

You have baby
photographs.
I—have—nothing.

*

You call me
Herald,
but know me
as entombed waters.

The pen dips
in the waters

and writes its
message of love.

*

To be held
—inside—
your body,

to be fed
by sun

to be cooled
by goodness,

to be born...

to redeem
and be redeemed.

*

Annunzio—
my mother calls in the dark.
I run
towards the name
of my father's
dead brother.

I hear her sweet
urgency
but I can't find her
in the woods.

I run
not with a marguerite
but bayonet.

*

Because my father loves my mother's eyes,
I have her blue eyes.
The more he loves, the more blue.

I have her heart

that beats so fast that I am afraid
it will burst.

At night my sex
opens and opens—
impure lips—
to swallow

the moon.

*

A blessing,
a blessing and—dismissal
of what has already left.

From the interior
of the church—
you see a fountain
shooting up
and toppling,
at a distance too far
to be heard.

The mind has to
provide the music.