

miniatures

in the store of small desires i touch nothing,  
afraid to break the delicate plaster hands,  
dishes the size of dimes. i won't decorate  
another house where i don't fit.  
i'm almost ready to risk something  
the size of my life & full of blood,  
to ride into town with my twin fears:  
obsession, the jacket of knives  
i look so good in –  
desire, a foul animal  
gone stupid in the heat.

in which la llorona is not looking for her children after all

& why must a woman be a mother in order to grieve where we can see her?  
& why is the weeping woman always missing someone else & not a part of herself?  
& why must the woman in white be a bride scorned  
& not married to the night's empty air?

she says *give me back my daughters*

but she means *i live with regret*

she says *give me back my daughters*

but she means *a future seemed possible*

she says *give me back my daughters*

but she means *i drowned the girl in me who knew hope*

she says *give me back my daughters*

but she means *what i am owed does not exist*

she means *i would swallow the river and still die of thirst*

i should have always been a knife

the times without blood on my hands,  
a weakness. in a darkened room, silence

i should have broken open, made to scream  
so loud it cracked the frosted glass.

i want a history of only strength. to confetti  
the archives, melt the microfiche to slime.

history is written by the guilty, to absolve themselves.  
does the sky ever let me out of its sight?

does shame leave the body? mine crawls  
up my throat nightly, asking for water.

the houses of girl-ghosts

always the half-hour before a thunderstorm, televisions  
tuned to static, a low tone humming through the rooms.  
altars everywhere: pyrite, half-melted candles, music boxes  
missing teeth. air woven through with smells: juniper,  
paint, a pine needle split under the nose and suddenly  
the sharp acetone of nail polish remover. a constant  
breeze makes every door a lazy mimic of the list  
and yaw of the last ship at sea. girl-ghosts do not sleep  
and like sharks do not stop moving, swim from room  
to dimming room to the sound of faraway birds, the furnace,  
the stomp of a slight girl in heavy shoes. a world muted  
under moss. the sky a near-boiling pot, the first raindrop waiting.

paper crowns

drop to your knees in the field in awe.  
all that land laced with your enemies' salt.  
the rust of the world rising up from the aquifer.  
rows of gaunt scarecrows growing like corn.

how dare you wish for daughters.  
how dare you plant herbs in fallow earth.

the field is sown with bones.  
the clouds are sown with clotted rain.  
out of the trees comes the old horror.  
will you take its hand?