**Plath’s Braid**

 *Lilly Rare Books Library, Indiana University*

 Annette Sisson

An intern lifts the braid—

eight inches of tether

slack in her tense hands.

She studies the nut-brown

strap. How to parse

this text? Why this bequest?

Why save the twisted plaits

at all? Maybe the mother

sensed the girl’s desire,

cropped her braids like spring

onions, kept them as a threat.

Did the child recoil,

shuddering before the scissors’

silver blade? Did she retrieve

the thick rein from the floor,

brandish it in the bathroom mirror,

crack it like a whip?