**Settled**

Emma Wynn

I know age and children have softened my hips

and sharpened my tongue -

I’m sorry

my hunger and my ache are spread so thin

where once there was only you

and a blaze.

When the shafts of afternoon

made golden the heat of us

and every inch of you shone uncommon.

I hung on your shoulder blades,

breathing your breath,

temple to temple in the rock of us,

and everywhere was the strength of spring.

Now, I’m drawn as a thread

rolled between the fingers of midnights,

nightlight vigils walking children

incandescent with fever.

And all their hands and tears,

drinking from my body with their relentless mouths

drawing out my breath and all my worry.

How do I learn to see my right hand?

Bands of tendons in delicate machinery,

tiny white scar flecks and

puffy branches of blood,

chips of nails unevenly cut -

so close to me and of me that I’m blind to it,

like all your gentle endurance

in the endless round

of laundry, lost hairbands, packed lunches,

dog shit, guest beds, bus stops -

swallowing the bile of patience.

Nothing is as worn as home,

and I have worn you, too -

woken you in the early dark begging for sleep,

you, stumbling out of our bed

blurry with exhaustion,

to rock babies, wilting heavy against your shoulder,

steady in the pale wash of dawn,

as ever, holding me.