**When it Doesn’t Rain**

*- to, L*

I walk the night-city without shoes.

One night someone left a wig on the bank

stairs and when I circled back, it had multiplied.

A nest. I imagined the people who tossed them

haphazard, no longer needing a disguise—

clumped strands that smelled like stale beer

and moonlight. A friend told me how a poem

is trying to be seen and hide at the same

time. One day I woke and decided that, after

all these years, I want to move home. Even

knowing the place has changed beyond me.

But my hands are bulbed and waiting to bloom—

they look like my mother’s. I have one photo

where she is curling my hair, I was three,

and in awe of becoming. The world wasn’t

yet an echo of dark around every corner.

The world wasn’t what it is. I walk barefoot

hoping not to get cut too deeply. I do not

think of her when the music drifts from bar

windows— a piano, even though she told

me about that summer she worked dancing

on one and singing. But when I cut my foot

on glass, and press the skin until blood

weeps—I look in that gash for her song.

**When it Rains**

*-**to, M*

I take the torso of a stringless guitar

to pretend pluck a song

for both my sons,

who squint in its soundhole

& imagine it swirling, sucking

in fragments of stars.

*Black hole*, one of them says,

& the other: *gun barrel*,

& for a moment

my hands go hot with fear,

fighting back fevers of war.

Yesterday, a drone

ripped through an orphanage

in Northern Ukraine,

& a dog emerged

with a mouthful of ash, begging

the camera for drink.

The host who walked

the burning rubble

stretched his hand

to soothe the dog, &

the dog, though desperate,

shrunk back snarling,

threatened those who neared. M,

once I watched my son

rummage river stones

to uncover his blurred reflection,

& discover, while digging,

a waterlogged clock, scuffed

by stone drift & silt.

That night he buried

the clock in a box

& set his ear against the grass

to listen to it tick. He

asked me to come, wondered

what I heard. And I said cellos,

though I meant shatter,

the gnashing of 300 mothers.