

Baby Carriage

Now when I see Betty sitting in the backyard
by herself, chewing a grassblade while watching
the sprinkler stitch wet circles on the lawn
I can fairly hear the sound of baby carriage wheels
turning deep inside her head

and when she assembles her arsenal of cleaning products
and wages a campaign against the dirt
which goes through the morning and into the afternoon
as she sweeps and mops and scrubs with pale intensity,
I don't ask what she's thinking

because I'm afraid she'll tell me
how her fields have all dried up
and her womb has filled with ashes
while she waited for me to come around
and get with the noble concept of fatherhood and family.

How quickly time has passed!
Nose deep in our books about the Self
or fighting over who would clean the sink
or taking the long way around the zoo
to get a better view of the reclusive swans

— while all around us,
couples who might have been our twins
bought houses and got pregnant
as it they were following assembly instructions
for a barbecue grill.

I love the quiet of an empty house in the middle of the day,
light slanting through the northwest windows,
plants rotating their satellite-dish leaves,
the hum of home like a machine,

and the self itself gradually floating down
to rest inside the self
like a coin falling to the soft floor of a lake.
No addition can improve that bronzish light.

But no man can understand
what it feels like for a woman
to see the children of her friends begin
their manufacture of freckles and skinned knees.

Or to hear the daughter she can't have
calling from the woods inside her sleep, calling to be born —
until she can precisely see
the shape of what is missing from the afternoon

while the man stands back and watches from a distance
like an anxious only child
trying not to make a noise
that will rouse her from her dream.