

APPARITION

DAMAGE

Is it the top has screwed
from my head, like the cap off a grenade? Screams
rise from me, who's missing my lid. I'll screw
to myself, what I must find again.
He throws the best cup
in the house, not at her; the wall
breaks into china
the handle in pieces dribbles to the skirting.
I've my hands to my ears, to scream,
shaping to a question mark. I am trained
into the serifs, ridges, and hollows of letters;
I am a watermark inside paper. No, I am something;

the boy fastens to the back of the couch
fingers like silent tongues. The voices of father
and mother make of my silence
this question, who will be hurt most?

A MAN WITH UNCLENCHED FIST

They chase about the table, hate, that takes
away gender. Her hair swishing cheeks,
that was the darling of his fingers.

My brother will die of their shouts. He weeps
and I must attend. But why won't they stop, who have
more energy than a child's? Why is this night

different from all others? How can
the four of us, unforced, hold each by the waist
to weep contrition and love? Unlovely mother

and weeping father, divorce, the church's
legal knife. There were chairs and heavenly cups;
a man, with unclenched fist blessed me and vanished;

it was as if I thought I could not die.

THROUGH LEAVES AND FRAGMENTED LIGHT

Through leaves and fragmented light the cricket flakes
her shaped notes off wings. Crouching
by a woman in pain, in the hair on my arm,
on wood, or its faecal ash, she has made visible
the idea for a spring hardened to tear, slowly
apart, our bodies. She is not
that idea: a contralto, her oily discs twanged
into our lives. If what it is
to make pain, what more

to clash this soft battering consequence, lyric
percussion, a pebbled
softly rattled water, that unfastens the two selves
of one mind, to stiffened facing flighted wings.
I search for, find your body-sound
flickering winter in ash's doldrums, the atomic drowsing
in a hearth. And with you
waiting is remembering, where none need
rise in the dark. Tell her, it is so.

for Margaret and Michael Mott