

In her green husk robe with deep blue folds,
Her body is an elongated ovum, insect-like.

Her robe splits apart to reveal one full row
Of yellow kernels, and two half rows.

From the neck down, judging from the hard red
Outlines of the kernels,

She is feed corn, slop corn.
She is ripe for the hogs.

THE SPOILED WOMAN

I've spoiled you, he said, and it was true.
He had spoiled her. She no longer cooked.
Once she had liked cooking. She no longer cleaned.
What she did was say how they never had fun anymore.
This made him feel bad. She talked about how much work
the baby made for her. This made him feel very bad.
It reminded him of his mother who had never seemed to want
him near her. And now his wife was hardly recognizable.
Once she had had a U-shaped smile.

From the beginning the baby knew his father's voice
and preferred him to her. Because I play with him,
her husband said. She played with the baby too.
But still he preferred his father. When she married
she thought, Finally, I am someone's favorite.
She had never been the favorite of anyone.
Now, the husband was the favorite of the baby
and the baby was the favorite of the husband, and yet,
he could not be happy until there were two more babies.

Sometimes it seemed as if she did not live in the real world. She never put gas in the car. He took care of that, plus all the money, all the insurance. At night he listened to her talk about how she never had time to sew, or ride her bicycle, or do things she enjoyed. But other than those two things, what did she enjoy? She refused to play golf—something they could do together.

Her fantasy is she walks out of the house and leaves him with everything. She sees him rush about, taking care of the baby he had wanted so badly. It is hard to imagine the baby missing her, but she can hear her husband say the baby needs her. She can hear him begging her to come back when he is out of underwear and the baby is out of diapers. In the rest of the fantasy she lives alone. It is a rural, bare-bones existence. She makes one one-dish meal which lasts a week. She has no car and no insurance. She watches the sunset from her porch. She has a porch because she is lucky.

DOMINION

In the half of the shell
that had not fallen away,

angled like the palmiers in the bakery,
they could see the skinned elbow of the wing.

It showed enough blood to attract ants,
the ants, smaller than anything

about the bird, with its heart
looming.

The husband turned to his wife.
“I should kill it.”