

REBECCA DUNHAM

*Sarah Good, Imprisoned, 1692*

—to her daughters, Dorcas & nursing baby

I never set some broken knife's steel  
blade to the afflicted, even as teal  
tight, they flock the pews, twisted eel-

like & crying. Milk daughters, I harbor  
you, my own two yellow birds. Burr  
my flesh, my familiars. Suck the meat or

sweat from between my fingers & spile  
me. Dorcas Good, I forgive you your pile  
of lies, the suckling snake you claim I

gave you, its flea-sized bite's red mark.  
Listen, little nameless one. Do not arc &  
squirm away. I am no more a rock

for woman to pitch against woman  
than witch or hag. Motherhood's an omen  
that pricks & pinches, a needling in

the gut, drenching us all in blood-soaked  
rags that we change in a privy's oak  
dark shame, & oh, we are all afflicted.