

## Nine

And how is it that I stand here looking for turtles  
Until the sun goes down  
and the blood retreats from the tips of my fingers to focus on more vital parts  
Like the hypothalamus  
I've never cared about turtles a day in my life

The creation of new life leaves traces of itself behind  
I carried her for nine months until her small body  
emerged  
Glistening  
We drew oxygen together so we could both cry  
She because of the cold and light,  
me because of the  
Mystery

Nine summers later,  
little bits of her still course through my blood  
Once she heard tell of a turtle crossing a mile down the road  
She jumped on her bike,  
dirty bare feet pumping the pedals furiously,  
back hunched,  
sweat glistening on her hairline,  
rosy cheeked jaw set in stone for the task ahead  
Purple bike streamers flapping against her  
forearms, decorated with temporary tattoos of various ages and viability,  
The streamers are powerless against her wishes  
when she decides to war with the wind

This is not so much a decision of character  
or a trait of determination.  
She cannot help loving turtles  
any more than  
I can help loving her.  
She could, and has, wept for turtles

And now whenever I walk by a pond, I stand  
Captive  
Praying I'll see a turtle. And I hold my breath  
when a small head  
Emerges from the glassy surface of the water  
Glistening  
Its back hunched behind it  
Saying hello to me from a world  
I will never know