

Living Room

for Owen

For now the war is silent,
folded on the coffee table, inky smudge
of smoke, young man's dark eyes
left to stare at the ceiling.

Tomorrow he'll be recycled.

There are many ways to disappear

but we've planted ourselves right here.

We've painted our living room red,
hung mountains on the walls
and trees and clouds,
a few slender boats like the slimmest of moons
rocking on gray water.

Tenderness and Slaughter

I've named my two hands. Sometimes I need
to disappear, enter the meadow and follow it
into birches there above the couch.

The yellow leaves stir
and feathery grasses clutch briefly at my legs,
to see if I'm real.

That place where night steals
over soldiers and my son's strapping in
for a mission, it's where I don't
want to go. He flies always in darkness –
harder to track him that way.
There are good ways to disappear
but my heart is a desert. He moves through a heat
rising up, a rug he must breathe through.

The room inside me bleeds anew,
murmurs like a stony stream, what if, what if...
I switch off the lamp, but its filaments
crack and pop. This room, the room within,
paints itself. No need for fixtures,

it unspools its own pictures,
long rivers I travel all night. I hold
a white cloth and gently wash an infant's face.
Where has he gone? I'm picking up stones,
weighing their heft, their talent for damage.
For hours I look for lost luggage, trudging
through a city of bells, ringing and ringing,
gold domes, and rubble in the streets.

Within me's a room of red heat
and things that float like bats, all shadow.
When I close my eyes the stars
appear. With every breath fireworks
sizzle, even as the clutter of my life
fades away. So many ways to disappear.

We don't talk about fear
but we've painted our living room red.
The mantle's bone white, like the shelves
for our books – a place where memories
rest. The beautiful trees remain.
And the clouds rushing over that lake,
they're splitting open; I watch them break.