

HANNAH THOMASSEN

ELEGY FOR MY MOTHER

She does not reach for the kindergarten-colored
cups held out, nor even fork or spoon,
though her mouth with something in it
produces something like a c
draggle-straggle strands of hair
greasy as her plate, diapers bunched
between her legs, breasts
flopping in her shirt—

(those legs, those breasts she flaunted,
always on display)

In all honesty, I tell the girl spooning up the peas,
she was not easy to live with—she was beautiful.
She had a lot of fun.

(I do not add it was no fun for me)

Still, she is my mother. I was born between
those legs, held against those breasts.
I want to hold her dear.
I want to brush that dim, lank hair,
bathe those tender parts—
but she is unresponsive to my touch
or bats my hands away—
I lose what heart I had.

Her fingers dabble in the soup,
drool dithers down her chin,
lunch is done. Bib untied, hands
and face wiped relatively clean,
and she is wheeled into the lined-up array
of human disarray slumping in the hall.

I sit with her a while, I do.
I watch her nod and twitch.
Then turn tail and run, defeated
by her stubborn somnolence.

I never do go back.

But when she dies, oh how I laugh!
When she slicks outta here
through the infinitely expandable doorway of death
to rise up laughing through the trees—

The sudden kinship then. The good, clean love.

Now that was fun.