

## **I was a girl only once**

who never grew into her mothers  
shoes, plucking up

every seed forbidden to sow.  
trying to exorcise memory,

guilty of apple eating—caught  
pretending I was still young

so momma could pretend  
she shielded me enough.

terminally exhausted, trust wounded  
and tied up by ingrown roots and

any old sin dug loose; generational fertilization—  
raised with intention

in constant rivalry with reality the  
rot sweet, but deep

like summer warmed meat  
or the sting of tissues, like ragdolls

stretched tight against  
secondhand guilt, lining

butane fingers,  
seasoning in our  
lineage.