

Trike for Short

The kid knew what he was doing.
Just as a curious troupe would gather
at another wave to join lock-jawed,
having noticed the loss, trichotillomania
was the word they heard and didn't—
a candid fixation on his right eye
and the step-steady hammer of bone,
slowly jaw-locked or lettered in stone
as if there was a difference.
The kid knew what he was doing.
He just couldn't explain it.

Youth

His earliest memory of it was a joke
told skinned like an eyelid he already knew
as fathers knew scalps as bald
and unprovoked—a pilot light braided in blues.
It was predatory song from then on
and he said he'd fight.
There were peeks, demure cuts
festooned between classrooms.

He thought of buoys on a lake.
He knew they were farther apart in the spring than in the fall,
that they were stern-weighted but would drift
and the scheduled pull of dam turbines
met daily load requirements and in time
the buoys were replaced like hair. And sometimes
there was little need for the winter drawdown
and they would stay put—or at least,
the gaps were less dramatic.

Festooned. He had overheard the word before
and liked it and thought he'd find it in the paper in full color.

Later

"I never noticed," she lied whitely.
But she had and she was so fluently nude when she said it,
so nude that he nearly ignored it,
slick as a needle and pledging lashes.
Then each bloomed braille by the sill full of lungs
and even the mirror wanted proof.
He said he'd fight and that was soon the end of that—
a curdled throat in the apartment
left not after but as soon as soon knocked.

Growth would come much too late.
Growth would loom like breasts.
And youth was no explanation for it all.
Buoys bumped hips with peak and trough
through the brackish film of a skinny-dip,
the reach for those anchored spokes of sin
and the pleasure of pulling out what felt best to stay in.