**Ode to a Woman (2)**

You looked smaller then.

Coiled and collapsed. Mud on your face

smeared over exposed limbs.

Bracing yourself.

This moment is oddly familiar:

The world has stones in its fists.

When you walked, did you puke in the bushes?

Bring up all you didn’t know was there?

Did you stand taller? Or

Did this haunt your dreams at night?

Come to you like lightning at the sight of

letters in sand or vultures of men.

Did this make you, even for a second,

cease your inner accusation? Or

did you think he was wrong?

I want to believe

No, I need to believe

This changed you.

Even if all it did was offer you

one strange story to tell to

your teenage daughter.

Something to wrap around her

on that night she too learns

the art of bracing herself.

Affection of the afflicted.