

One or Another

Ayla Walter

*Young girls
gathered here.
Wet voices, speaking of only sweet sharp things
of being smothered
of being cut and sliced
and threaded through a needle's eye.*

A list of things I am angry about
still:
the unknown multiplex of moments
I've forgotten, on purpose or otherwise
bug-bites and small things
fingernails and tangled hair torn smooth
my stomach churning sour milk into butter
making acid sweet, turning light cream heavy
the speechless gravity of it all.

The flinch before a plate hits the ground.

The story so far is that some subtle hand molded me
like this, squashed me and tugged
and I failed to hold firm
this maybe fiction
maybe magical realism
maybe I'm not clay but a tree
and I'll feast yet upon what's been buried.

What did you learn in school
I was the swimming and sword fighting girl
I was the woodland creature
felt closer to the Hydra than I ever did my peers
or like the Furies, I went to sleep each night imagining I felt wings forcing
their way out my back.
I couldn't always fly, you know.

Once I was furtive
once I was child king
and philosopher; Calvin and Hobbs
stuffed animals to dress as instead of dolls

*Wet voices
sharing sweat, and shaky truths.*

In Fantasy, I always sided with the dragon
still:
I won't eat the girl.