

There's A Tyre Swing In Bagley Wood

a first line is not a poem

a punctured secret is not a poem

that dog turd you picked up with a big shard
of glass: not a poem

the fact that the bird you love best
is a mistle thrush

whose song is always in
a minor key

though delightful
is still not a poem

nor is loneliness
nor is oblivion

the tyre swing in bagley wood
is a tyre swing - not a poem

the realization that right now there are more poets alive
than dead in the past is - you guessed it - not quite a poem

the stranger who thought that life
looks like a dreadful path

that nevertheless
we can walk it

that the powers we carry are nameless
until we are forced to call on them

was most likely a poet
which still does not make their reflections a poem

so what is a poem?
what is a poem?

is only a question ever a poem? do mistle thrushes sing
in a minor key?

are they really your favourite birds?
are you lonely? how lonely?

have you ever been down to bagley wood?
I haven't

my entire bagley wood knowledge is
hearsay

is there a tyre swing in bagley wood?

for a spell

the solitude is
an unexpected present

it's a hot day
the river bank's earth cakes and ridges

I bake along with it then swim
in the dirty dirty river

I share the water with things that float
bird feathers bottles blossoms

condoms and copulating
dragonflies

I share the river with things which pollute
blaring engines and motor oil

the bridge ahead bears strange graffiti
Banu it says *is god*

Banu's my mum's name
I think she'd agree

I turn away and swim back towards
the towel I stole

from the dog and a waiting
tupperware full of cherries

maybe this is what you meant
when you wrote that

it's moments like these we stay
alive for

the water phasing into
a thin layer of warmth over the cold undercurrent

I am afraid of happiness
but floating here



in this stream of water and diluted sewage
I let it in

The Clockmaker's Daughter

I never knew my mother
almost dropped out of clockmaking
school when she had to admit to herself
there was something tick-ticking inside her:
something she had made not by squinting
through microscopes and careful attention to detail but instead
by neglect and forgetfulness (qualities they do not encourage
at the horological institute)
foxing her tutors with flowy dresses and ponchos
she stayed on and half a year later gave birth
to me right on the due date because
I was always going to be a punctual baby

and the first time she saw my round flat face
she smiled with relief: she knew just how to read me
she hummed along to the song of my cogs and gears
as she carried me into her workshop then
propped me against the wall between her assortment
of die plates and steel files and calipers
she worked late into the night furbishing my most important parts
with a small bow-lathe until she had polished me into
something she would not be ashamed to hand in as her
final assignment: an elaborate device with a steady heartbeat
the kind a room would feel empty without
a freestanding marvel with two hands and a mouth
for telling the truth of time

All That is Left of Liv

this white four-poster once
was her laughter & the darkening

night sky once was her tongue
the orangery once was a little

tear she showed no one isn't it
striking these shooting stars were

how she sneezed when
the dust came down the cashmere

I'm wearing once was her left foot
this Jasmine bush here used to be

the way she tilted her head
when not really listening those peacocks

once were her elbows the twin
dolls her headaches oh and I think

this stuffed swan was actually her heart
once but this whole country used to be

her heart come to think of it
all the cliffs & wild springs & lava fields

the unending summers the northern lights
jade flames against a black canvas