

*Wherein Proliferation is Explained to the Surrogates*

They tell us the cells will enter our reaches. From one to another of our organs, lighting the succession with their own gruel matter. Silt the perimeter, trench the wire. From then on, they say, we will be free from solitude. We will keep time with our own beating packets.

In the doorway, with pneumatic bunting and ribboned hiss, the midwife made for ready. I was stood, readied. In my stretch I agreed to you, and in my stead. You were introduced. By the midwife. By the veins in her wrist. By her avatar, the needle and her gurney song low.

*Wherein a Surrogate Fails to Admit*

They say that we cannot transmit. We were not built to generate a message from the core. And when her abdominal plates split along the crest, when they girded her limb with putty and fuselage she could not call what she had a *pain*.

After the midwife completed the picketing, I carried her charge back to the nest. I meant to. A bulb had gone out in the track along the corridor, and I thought it that which we do not translate. With the bundle, I slid between panel and hull. The studio glistened.

They had affixed to the floor, in pattern, a trundle of moth-eaten footsteps. The plumed vinyl from which each fall was cut bore slippage. Step. Shuffle. Heel. Ball. Change. I meant to. Step. They say we cannot complain. They asked me to remove the tourniquet, and when I clarified that the limb was mine, they asked me to remove that as well.

*Wherein a Surrogate Covers a Debt*

I grew fat for this animal, and still  
it does not come near. I pasted  
to the concrete barriers innumerable  
squares of reflective paper.

None were actually square as such.

In my pillow, I hid the forked talon  
from the fowl and in my hemlines  
I secured the plaster teeth nicked  
from the instructional wherein they

grew from the gums, sunk back,

grew again.

For this animal, I rubbed my skin  
with oleo and wore a gown of egg white.  
The midwife imposed a thermometer  
and materialized in the fragment hour.

*Where does it sting?* she asked me.

And I answered her in my deck.