

the first time i was 12  
i sat on your lap, and let you  
whisper in my ear all the things a girl should be.

this is what you left behind: vinegar love.  
and i drank it till it seeped from my  
pores, and burnt the hands of those who  
tried to touch me.

i found my glow stuffed in my navel,  
not in the hands of a boy like you promised me.  
my slim waistline exists in the place between  
who i am and who you want me to be;  
i will never find it.

sloppy thighs unfurl like a map  
and i trace the sweat-slicked lines,  
following the path to who i can be.  
i contort, spread myself thick – the light  
does not pass through me.

i am the moon's daughter. i ate her.  
she sank into my palms like henna.  
my sumerian nose. my father's eyes.  
my heritage that roils beneath my skin.

i wear my rolls like bracelets  
around my wrists. i let myself be  
ugly. apricot-mouth; unblossoming.  
i am not in season.

i swallow sand that sinks into my fruitless  
womb, and thrust my fingers down my throat  
to scrape it out. i will not be an oasis. even the  
sun struggles to breathe.

i drip milk from my mouth and speak a  
broken language. the poems i write in english  
groan in arabic and  
die as women.

long-limbed beast. my arms are branches  
and they will reach beyond what you can see.  
do not sit me on your lap and feed me my  
grandmother's leftovers. I will not be the  
story you tell of me.

tomorrow is here.  
tomorrow is mine.