to name a creature  
  
love  
bloody and baby-shaped  
 screamed for the first time in a strangers arms

and was suddenly disconnected

*i heard it made mum sick  
for nine months*

sick from carrying so much love  
  
a balloon of happiness  
they almost had to pop her  
they almost had to pull it out -  
 then it appeared

and mum was empty  
deflating like a circus tent at the end of winter

*nine months was enough love for a lifetime*  
  
it can be carried  
 is carried  
 was carried   
until fingertips and elbows become graveyards where love  
 once touched   
  
 \* \* \*  
  
 there is a blankness  
 or void  
 where love forgot to be -  
 present -  
  
 *and it is so dark*  
 there is a humming  
 behind my forehead and my ears in the nighttime  
  
 \* \* \*  
  
 love wakes up to //   
 broken plates dad sat in a //  
 haunted blue room // pipes burst  
  
 \* \* \*

*there is a photo of bob marley in the bathroom  
sometimes he looks like he is crying*   
  
 \* \* \*

love had hollow bones  
and feathers that fell out in my hair  
a few times it made dad bleed  
caught and caged by stained glass windows  
we teased it with freedom in the mornings  
and were told to cover up all the mirrors   
to stop it falling for its own reflection  
  
love gave the illusion of flight  
petrolled wings that promised an uptake on the wind  
 and preferred to walk  
  
 \* \* \*

*held by a woman  
with love knotted above her knuckles  
and pain eased  
by valleys that parted from her lips  
molten silver words made love*oh - *so precious*  
*before ripping it from our hands*

\* \* \*

i left with a fist sized lump between my ribs and spine and cried to see my own reflection in mirrors that we no longer covered and all the doors in the house were open and I could see through the windows and when the light fell there were no slanted bars and i was alone

\* \* \*  
  
love got smaller and smaller  
and when mum and dad divorced  
it bundled itself between my eyebrows  
under my skin  
and couldn't take flight anymore  
  
at first i was just keeping it safe  
waiting for someone to come and collect it  
this little bit of love  
i had a little too much of

ten years later  
mum and dad don't even notice it anymore  
*i think i'm going to get it cut out  
i think i'm going to cut it out myself*love grew out of its body  
 fast  
left parts of itself in phantom tollbooths

and sun bleached book covers

and ipod shuffles that played the same songs on repeat  
  
love painted over its walls  
and took the family photos down  
when it felt forgotten  
  
then split itself down the middle -   
love did -  
and was carsick on the way to manchester  
 disguised as a one-man travelling band  
with two broken guitar strings and calloused hands  
telling its friends it didn't need saving because

*this is just how things are now*  
 \* \* \*

at christmas time  
dad got a toy car  
and skidded down the M25  
in the snow   
  
 the bureau for lost children called  
 to make sure love hadn't hurt itself  
 or been hurt by someone else  
  
*love rolled its eyes when it saw mum crying*  
 reported and filed

left in a dusty cupboard  
 told to stay

*exactly*  
where it was

\* \* \*

i found that love had my name  
my height  
and weight *(fluctuating)*   
and shut itself down under too much stress  
  
love bruised on laminate floors  
and radiators // dads hands caught it  
 sometimes   
  
love fell into routines like

smashing bottles on the way to the bus stop // plucking

hairs from its lash line // knees // making itself

as small as possible //  
  
*love still couldn't remember six years of its life*   
  
 \* \* \*  
  
mum gave birth to a baby called sadness and pretended to call her love  
  
 \* \* \*  
  
again  
  
bloody foetal   
 being held for the last time //   
 a strangers arms