

Mary Ann

Timid and too cautious,  
my motions expose me.  
I turn the faucet just more  
than dripping,  
I grip the knife too tensely  
as I cut the tops off strawberries.

I may be self-conscious;  
Mary Ann is not.  
Her hands know the subtle things:  
pull a bowl from a knob of clay  
spinning on a wheel,  
pinch the fabric of a blind  
seam to expose the stitches,  
adjust the angle of the lamp  
minutely,  
frost the pumpkin cupcake  
perfectly  
with cream cheese icing.  
When stirring the dough  
for oatmeal-chocolate-chip  
cookies, hold the whisk  
like a fork, not tangled  
in your fist, with a circular  
mashing movement.

She wields a chainsaw for trimming  
tree branches as expertly  
as she grips the scissors for trimming  
my hair. Her hands are firm  
on my head, instructing me how to hold  
my neck while she snips.

Her cracked, strong fingers fold  
over my limp, indecisive hand,  
and I imagine her muscle memories  
and the knowledge in her joints  
passing to me as she says grace,  
squeezes and lets go.