

## Ellipsis

You spoke in tongues today  
and it's the word, the phrase,

the uneven carpet tripping  
your feet. Your toes

like the dots of ellipses,  
dot dot dot dot

how ma ma ma ma  
stumbles across your lips.

You are not a paraphrase,  
nor a summary, you are

not an omission, you are  
love sounds sounding

into collision, continuing  
part of me, from me, of me,

and I sound sounds with you,  
shape my mouth and move my tongue

to form fricatives, plosives, nasals,  
vowels, syllables, verbs. I am

transforming into the mama  
blooming on your tongue.

neurotoxin

I was four or five, my brother was my age  
plus four, we floated in the kidney-shaped pool,

turquoise shattered by Shasta lupine,  
sunlight horizoned on my skin,

chemical smell of chlorine  
and sun-warmed manzanita.

At the bottom of the pool, way down there,  
paint chips moved like rockfish,

crawled when my feet agitated a current,  
water broke and magnified into playthings.

the snake. my mom on the patio, screaming.  
my brother threw his beachball, threw it.

my grandfather punctured the water with a pitchfork  
wove the Rattler between tines, scales belly up.

I was four, five, six, wasn't dead.  
I remember none of it. the memory isn't mine.

my mother's mouth, her lips like pool water,  
lips that said words into words into worry,

she told and told and retold when I was ten, eleven, so on,  
she lipped the Rattler, licked it with her tongue,

worried it like a canker sore on the inside of her cheek,  
festered it into me, rattled my memory into puzzle pieces,

jig sawing their way to the bottom of that pool,  
where my feet never touched.