

We who are not ingenues
A toast to us who have never been

Who were old before we were young
Who find our joy in lines and angles
We who did not dance, then
Who never sported tap-shoes
Who are not running backward

A toast the grande dames
To headscarves and crashing waves and duct tape in the windows
And brighter lights now
Over the broken brick and cobbles

To sunrise bedtimes
To iron and copper turned green
To the seashells
To golden boots that carry roses now
But could kick the shit of out someone, once

We who are rising
Rising in hats and gloves and feather boas
And leather jackets and work shirts
Who carry solid wood furniture down too many flights of stairs
For a chance to be home, at last

A toast the the black-bobbed wig you never wore
Though you would've worn it like a crown

To the green belt
To the salt-stained hems
To the coverless books
To the cryptic love letters
To the girl watching to harbour
And the 4am pot of tea too weak to drink
Too weak to stand

We who didn't know how to ask permission
Who knew when not to dance
Who knew it was our time

To sheep in the fields
And the mud-covered shoes
To the tent in the field
To the seat on the bus
To crawling out of our skin
To faking it
To the hills

We who were not ingenues
And never mourned the loss
Who never lost a thing

Call us what we were then
Call us tall and loud and plenty
Call us golden in a different light
Call us the broken spines of 300 books
Call us white cotton sheets stained with our own sweat
Call us fishing in the ocean
Call us satin and stained glass
Call us broad names and windows
Call us velvet
Call us never
Call us close

Because we know

A toast the tasselled women
To boys in between
To leather belts and stories
To leather stories and belts

We who are not ingenues
Have walked til we bled
And swam
And sang

A toast

A burnt offering

A long-awaited triumph

And a song in our key.