

Small

I wish I could say they were sweet
to each other through it all, but they weren't.

They clawed for territory and staked out claims,
the instruments over and over applied to her body, chemicals

inducing a speeded-up state of production, follicles ripening,
eggs bulging on the moon's surface.

It was 2 am by then, and what happened?
The swelling of some anguish in each of them,

her need for comfort, to be right, his need for what, exactly?
(so post-Freudian, so *me, me, me*)

His job to hold steady, to move past
the grip of whatever memory held sway, whatever

shadows took shape in the room.
There was an embryo, it was

only just barely attaching, it needed to be protected,
above all else, it needed shelter, her job

to shield its fierce industry, spinning and spinning.
And why wasn't that embryo primary in attention,

beyond the need to assert some strange
undisputed sense of self?

Oh, great sorrow comes from it—
a stream widening to river—

Oh sorrow for our little engines of self—
It had no choice, it let go, that little blastocyst did,

its spinning and spinning to shape more cells, finally refuted,
the atmosphere inhospitable—

Oh, no, it was science?
blood and hormones and endometrial lining?—

not anger, not sadness,
not failure of imagination—

the body's interior a map to follow,
one moment of heat, let loose—

Oh sorrow of the body pumped to machine,
Sorrow for its fierce industry—

Not even violent, in a physical sort of way, just verbal
sparring, the wind-up toy of anger—*you, you, you*—

air hollow and stilled, accusations ringing against it—
Oh sorrow in the face of anger—

It's the little court of self we protect
—and at what cost?—

death in this case very small, microscopic, a passing
almost no one would notice, a barely-coming-into-being death.