A POEM ABOUT

In small-town Michigan, a loose fit in the parentless apartment,

we four. Neat, het pairs, sorted for size and matching colors.

In the master bedroom, trophies aping gold and wood-paneling

resign themselves apologetically on cheap shelves. The rounded

waterbed bucketing toward red shag carpet. The short, brown two

wait for you and me to leave before easing onto the sea of love.

You lead me by the hand to a back room that could be anyone’s, a stack

of newspapers against one wall, the bed unremarkable, except

that we are going to share it. Darkness, then growing light

as my pupils gorge on the black edges of the room. Your face,

so pretty, even up close, skin a blank braille that reads ‘baby.’
I pulse like a star, enlarged
with the idea that I, the ‘girl,’
might be in command, really
be an ‘older woman.’ Bright
with the thrill of detachment,
of being coolly unindulgent
to you - you! with your living
penis, which I never see, but press
my palms around until it leaves
a long, white kiss on my good
nightgown. I wonder if your
sweet groans have crawled
beneath the door and down
the hall. I spend one wide-eyed
moment listening for sounds
to wash wash wash from the next
room. Hearing a ripe quiet,
I kiss you goodnight, content
with having waded in what’s
drowning him and her. We were
all young, or younger, then,
and unskilled at breathing under-
water: but the difference between
our splashing and their immersion
is like the difference between me,