

## **The Philologist's Daughter**

There was only one spring like that one, greenest  
before the word green, when your syllables were  
so full of the world no ear could decode them, when  
without a tooth to your name you devoured every ting  
with a polyglot's relish. Slowly your syntax

would break the sea's surface, grow legs, walk the earth.  
You'd say milk and mother, leaving moo  
and ma behind, shed skins, as I murmured  
through heaps of split spines, learning Beowulf's battles,  
his feasting and sorrow, his English:

while he slept, stan became stone, and loaf-ward  
crumbled into lord. I savored  
those morsels of patricide, no less your daily  
lunges at my heart. Words are dumb things to love, dumb

as deer that step onto twilit highways.