

knife thrower

the woman's lips pursed
and her body shuddered
as if she was stung
by electricity

maybe the knife thrower
meant to cut her –
reveal how dangerous
his craft was – simply
nick her wrist
as the blade he threw
stole the ribbon from her grasp –
driving the heart of it
like a root
into the wooden target

maybe he lost his concentration –
perhaps a whisper
or cry was caught
somewhere in his head

the audience gasped
but hushed quickly
when he picked up another knife
and pointed to the rose
nestled in her hair

her face once again
flushed with innocence –
she smiled drowsily

and when she gazed
across the stage
she was suddenly
the town's fair daughter

another drum roll began
when the knife thrower turned
his back to her and tied
a scarf over his eyes

the audience's fear swelled
and the knife thrower held on
to that moment

until he could hear rocky sea-walls
rumble

everyone was trapped

their mouths stitched closed
their hands and feet manacled
to the ferruginous wood

from *Root of Lightning*