Conception

Julianna Baggott
CONCEPTION

I will collapse beneath this tender task, 
keeping the record, the sun-stroked mantel clock,

the chipped soup bowl, the hum of the dome hair dryer 
pouring heat from its dim sky of little holes.

My parents are making love in early spring, 
late in the day in her grandmother’s house.

The old woman raises the empty bowl 
to her lips again and again, my sister 

deaf under the blue helmet—her hair drying 
to an electric rise. I am swelling

and waiting, a ticking egg, a twisting tail, 
a fly smashing against bright glass.

I imagine her quiet breath in his ear, 
his hands, blood-swollen from metal grooves

and sharp-toothed gears, and Jesus 
hung above the bed, head lolled

as if to get a better angle on their lovemaking, 
a witness to all he missed. His wooden cross 
trembles against the flowered wall. 
Outside the window, a bird bobs on a branch, 
a dog barks, a kid on skates clatters 
down the sidewalk like a tin train,

and the daffodils give the first yellow twists 
within their thick green tongues.