

# Social history

There is the daughter  
and the mother, beside  
like a leaden  
and watchful stone.

The daughter keeps time  
with the tossing of her head.  
Her snaking spine swims in the bedsheets  
like koi in a pond.

“My daughter is a dancer,” the mother says.

To you, the daughter is a golem, a doll  
awakened through a quickening breath.  
You must wait for an incantation to animate  
her serpentine frame:  
sereebuhl pahlsee.

But her mother woke her first with a kiss  
and plucked her name from the sky  
like a gift.

Along their journey,  
her mother has packed mounds  
of clay into her pockets, and dirt  
into her sopping wet boots.  
She’s stuffed fistfuls of moss  
and cactus flowers into her hair.  
She has dragged the trunk of the family tree  
through muddy rivers and desert mountains  
so that the hospital room might smell like  
home.

By the mother are schemes scribbled  
in hieroglyphs. In this distant tower,  
every word is a shibboleth and everyone  
speaks in tongues.

She cannot calculate the sums  
by which the attendants busy themselves to  
tweak and tune her daughter’s blood,  
like an abacus of salt.

Yet, you cannot do what she has done:  
It is, by all reckoning,  
impossible.

She has crossed  
rivers,  
deserts,  
continents,  
for love, and yet  
there is a black box strapped  
to the mother’s ankle  
to keep her from running

so that, when the time is right,  
she may be thrown into a cage,  
so that her steps might remind her

this is a crime.

—Santiago Enrique Sanchez