

American Proper

At birth the umbilical cuts close to the ideal
woman: chases her
down the same path, bodies turning into bodies,

children springing from the floor. Not scissors
echoing down.
Not tintinnabulation emptied

of pot-and-pan parades. The delicious thump
her headache wants:

Wear the heart like a home.

When this reaches her, the prick and sting
might bring her
to dog-ear every safari: coax a busy oasis

out from under the rug: excavate
fossilized pollen:
order a backhoe to re-smooth the scene.

She's pineapple and lace.
A corset grove.
She's American proper and well-read.

Untitle her, please—peel her
off powdered milk and embroidered duvets.
Give her loose sand

and pea gravel, a container that won't break.
Tell her *turn here*.
Here. Tell her the light is hot because it pushes

away. Give her a book of synonyms
with lines to fill in:
insomnia. Like *chronic*. *hypnotized*. *revived*.

Tell her to dream away from her dreams.
When the light's last glimmer
is a secret pink she holds on her tongue, ask her

to pry her knees apart and lie
down beside her:
seventy-two names for god waiting between.