

To You Who Wait

You have the patience of a woman, you can wait
at home, teaching children to color in the lines,
you're good at staying in the lines others create.

If wooden swing sets and sand toys occupy the space
where you picture rose trees and tulips and columbine,
you have the patience of a woman, you can wait

for an hour to see the doctor, he's running late
this time, don't complain, it's only your time,
and you're good at staying in the lines others create.

His degree took priority, husbands have to rate
first, maybe later when you're older you'll shine.
You have the patience of a woman, you can wait

to take a class here, another there, enough to placate
unrest, don't disrupt the role you've been assigned.
You're so good at staying in the lines others create.

When poetry emerges, you think it's too late
for your voice to be heard, afraid you'll no longer find
you have the patience of a woman who can wait
or stay in the lines that others create.

Piano Lessons

My mother loved to tell stories
of how she scaled that mountain
as a girl, a rebel against
advice to protect herself
from driving rain, biting wind and losing

herself. She didn't lose herself
in stands of trees
where light never reached
the ground, or where she carved
her own trail, and always found her way
back. She lost herself

to the back
of my grandmother's
hand and the sting of my grandmother's
voice. And to the crack
of the piano teacher's stick
across legs that barely reached

the ground and across
knuckles that could never play
outside with other children or play
one wrong note in an otherwise
perfect scale.