

Tending

In the pull-out bed with my brother
 in my grandfather's Riverton apartment
my knees and ankles throbbed from growing,
 pulsing so hard they kept me awake –
or was it the Metro North train cars
 flying past the apartment, rocking the walls,
or was it the sound of apartment front doors
 as heavy as prison doors clanging shut?
Was the Black Nation whispering to me
 from the Jet magazines stacked on the floor, or
was it my brother's unfamiliar ions
 vibrating, humming in his easeful sleep?
Tomorrow, as always, Grandfather will rise
 to the Spanish-Town cock's crow deep in his head
and perform his usual ablutions,
 and prepare the apartment for the day,
and peel fruit for us, and prepare a hot meal
 That can take us anywhere, and onward.
Did sleep elude me because I could feel
 the heft of unuttered love in his tending
our small bodies, love a silent, mammoth thing
 that overwhelmed me, that me awake
as my growing bones did, growing larger
 than anything else I would know?