

A MOTHER GIVES BIRTH TO SOMEONE WHO WON'T LAST

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With thanks to Fanny Howe

Morning come the inevitable separation:
a body from its sheet, finch from its perch
on our car's side mirror. You're like the sun
up from a crouch under Prospect Hill
sliding the rick-rack curtains open
and the sad lab past a stand of trees breaks
from sleep to start his morning sob, a sigh
to part the vapors. A mob of Harleys,
in for their annual rally, crack
the pavement and practically split the air
in half. Time is a lake, upstate New York,
and its personage on Earth that biker's girl
at Lanzi's by the Dock, who said last night,
loud enough so we all could hear, "I hate
to even mention *him*, but it's so much
smoother riding with *you*." Her current man,
his face long and brown, turned to the water
and took a drag off his cigarette, its smoke
freeing itself, satisfied by her show of faith,
it seemed. You put your hand on my belly
to shield the baby who isn't here yet, but
to the *now* man, the *smooth-riding* man,
smoke is a good death. There's no running from it.