

## He Fashions Himself a Contender

That man is in pain,  
it rides all over his face  
stringing his lips  
clothesline tight  
pitting his eyebrows  
against each other.

You can see it in his hands  
fingertips pushing,  
pushing the table down  
holding of the opposition  
holding up the last line  
he tossed out, before

his finger pointed this way  
and that, intercepting  
his words, splattering them  
across the table  
across themselves  
drops escaping  
to the floor  
mixing with the dirt  
of the city.

He pulls at his trousers  
lifts his foot to the stool  
he wants to feel himself  
squirm  
at the touch of his eyes  
on the little girl's breasts  
just beginning to form  
ideas  
in her head,  
he can mold  
around himself  
shape to the rhythm  
of his voice.

Words falter  
shoulders slump and he turns  
from applause  
long enough to rinse a smile  
from his beard  
smooth it with thanks to a God  
who gave him sons  
and never once  
a daughter.