

**Numb**

Casket-flat I lie, arms limp, fingers laced  
in a dentist's chair, drugged, my lip a heavy ton.  
On the tongue, the metallic taste of blood,  
I feel like Tina after Ike's last beating.  
Beyonce's octave range bellows from speakers  
screaming three minutes for some man to leave.  
When my father left he raged nine hours,  
banging and begging at a bolted door,  
standing in a deluge of old clothes  
with a shoebox marked 'Army Documents.'  
That was one year after my mother's last  
beating, times she would say were seldom,  
but a count of any is plenty.  
I was eight and hated daily green peas,  
brushing my teeth, the arguments that rose  
and cascaded down our third floor window.  
That day I scaled stairs to the words 'I'll kill you'—  
Inside, the curdling sight of her already  
swollen eye, the sparkle of a knife blade  
pressed against her neck—I screamed and felt  
nothing—numb, as the room went black.