Crafting a Child

*For Joanne aka Mom aka Nannny*

I am not my mother’s daughter…but I want to be.
When I wrap my fingers around my daughter’s pink hands
And feel my pulse snake through my wrist into her heartbeat. When mine
Is frantic, hers skips and I am tired with the day that’s gotten itself over me
Wielding a missed deadline and a crumpled paper and a memory of my mother’s endless patience.

She swam in an ocean of unfinished picture books because the young me fashioned messes,
And when my daughter wriggles her nose and turns my briefcase upside-down to create a tornado
Of reasons onetwothree why I have ignored her today,
I remember my mother’s job WAS me.
And I paid her terribly, I forced her into slavery overtime, and the benefits
Were reaped by me rather than the other way around.

I am not my mother’s daughter…because I’m not clever enough to let the wrong things
Go down the drain with the rancid food.
And I live in a time where her sacrifices aren’t acknowledged anymore.
They’re relegated to antique stories with curled edges, Betty Crocker aprons, and the tsks
Of the modern age, a shining gleaming inadequacy of doing everything
And doing nothing simultaneously.

I am my mother’s daughter because I can throw the voice she gave me
Like a ventriloquist onto my daughter’s sparkling eyes
And she sees beneath the me who is haggard and unforgiving.
She will one day watch my sacrifices like a sociologist nodding and dissecting the way we live,
And with her own silvery voice will cry
She possessed a mother who was her grandmother’s daughter
And that like all of the women before her brandished the only thing that mattered.

Love.