

## Tanis Rideout

### history lessons

a moment caught twisting, twisted  
perfectly  
like Jackie O's scarf  
when she was Jackie K  
and her husband was shot  
history framed precisely in cat's-eye glasses  
far from the tour of  
the white houses row on row  
cars backing out of in-line driveways  
with a perfectly coiffed wife at each door  
waiting, waving, to relieve frustrations  
with vacuum cleaners  
leaving leisure time  
to read books about sex  
and discuss the new woman  
over china tea sets  
while little girls play with plastic ones  
in the living room after school  
where they learned  
you can survive the bomb  
if you hide under your desk.

### A painting by Mr. Hughes

For Cam

we stared  
you and I at the poster on the wall  
of Ophelia  
just before she throws herself in the river  
and we giggled

you leaned and whispered  
your lips touching my lashes  
so I saw the words  
watch and she'll look at you  
and like a chant  
you conjured the woman to life  
so that eyes not painted by the artist  
looked down at me

I wept that she would bloat  
the river spill over its banks

while I slept in images  
of black water, blue  
lips and opaque eyes  
you pressed your thumb just below my jaw  
into my throat  
to feel my pulse  
and make sure I didn't drown.