

KATHERINE COTTLE

For Addison, September 2011

Ten years ago, I held your wobbly neck
while the hospital TV played and replayed
the planes crashing into the towers,
my own stomach a mess of staples and blood,
playing and replaying
the sound of your first cry
and the new life that began for all of us
at that moment.

Today, the entire Humanities building began to shake
and I stopped grading, started to panic before
the news reached us fifteen long minutes later:
an unexpected earthquake.
I couldn't reach you for over an hour.
I was alone, in every way.

*I was fine, Mom, you told me later.
Grandma and I just thought a tiger
was crawling under the couch.*

In another decade you may be
even further away from me—

living in another state, another country,
any place a mother would worry about her son,
which is anywhere she isn't.

And when disaster strikes again,
which it inevitably will,
in other man-made and natural forms,
and metal, flesh, and ground
meet and enter one another
like angry lovers,
know there was a beginning,
a moment you cannot remember:

a mother looking into her son's eyes,
seeing the upcoming wind and rain,
the forthcoming death and fury.

Know that she did not turn from those dark pupils,
Instead, she promised to continue with you,
through it all, without question.