



# MY HISTORY OF LEAD

The Romans love it. Sweet and sour  
in wine, sprinkled as salt on their suppers. Decline  
and fall, poor Romans: go crazy. Let every wonder  
burn. Turn to all of Europe, watch us learn  
to poison our own. The French call it  
*poudre de la succession*, a quick and easy way to get  
to what we want. Come over here, to almost now:  
we opaque our paint with it, make it quick to coat,  
a glossy pleasure on the brush, until our babies take  
up flakes from windowsills, doorjambs. We put it  
in our gas, give it more oomph, less knock,  
smooth the ride in cars as big as boats, smooth  
as riding rails that we don't bother to build.  
Bad faith; we undermine our us, write our progress  
off. In Flint for years the cars pour off the lines  
in flocks, in shining lots. Now the sudden river  
slips into pipes and spreads from house to house  
while people sleep. And here we are, a stack of easy  
metaphors: declining, falling, the bodies of the poor  
all pave the way, their leaders knowing better,  
knowing best. What we know and when we know it.  
What we do for money, for a little bit of cash.