

Amy MacLennan

PASTE EATER

Dried paste flakes on the lid's inside,
he scrapes them under his nails
then into his mouth, makes sure the teacher
doesn't see, but the other kids do,
watch as he dips a popsicle stick, licks
some paste off, tang on his tongue,
the long swallow. They know it's wrong.
Don't eat paste, chalk, paint, clay,
don't chew erasers, rulers, pens . . .
but the need still stays
for the first universe, milk, nipple,
fleshy warmth crammed in, everything
mouthed whole in gulp and suck,
fingers apart or one drooled fist,
blankets, woolly toys, anything soft,
or hard when teeth cut through,
that ache to gnaw and slobber,
it's all there, always there,
a taste for the sticky world.

