

Breach Birth: Aug. 20, 1891

Maureen Clark

"We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, not permitting any person to enter into its practice."

Wilford Woodruff, President
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
October 6, 1890

He is born breach, meaning gap.
From the beginning
he was negative space
a blue cast shadow,
blurred into background
by a squint of his father's eye
and a prophet's Manifesto
proclaiming an end to polygamy
in the Utah Territory,
Swede Town,
in this very house,
where his mother labors.

He is the unstitched seam
between blood and water,
a dangling thread not quite cast off;
draggling in dirt between his father's
God and his pocketbook;
two unreachable shores.

Luck will be his religion,
he can live with arbitrary grace.
He'll be a shadow on the porch
a blank face under the brim
a thread of light
along the jaw.