American Family:
A Syndrome Singing Skin Disorder

It's the humming—not notes.
Not a melody. It's a signal. A rattle
nesting in my joints.

Like the snarl of yard mutts,
the clipped chirp
of an unhinged ceiling fan.

When they sit near me
some brown, soupy ditty
scurries down my spine.

Like they've trapped a rusty
robin in their elbows.

Modulated and molded.

Pored. Pock-marked. Smooth
as an infant's innocence.

Skin.

There's this thing I see every morning
on the AM bus.

Who sees twelve-year old legs?

A book bag? A girl?
It says “Come.”

It sings, “I am your now.”
This high pitched lilt
chucks its volume down the street.

Its trickster, blow-pop smile is a mistake,

is anger, a wily, guttural ruse. Deep
under her skin, her hollow jingle jabs my ribs

makes me want to slam a face to the ground.

Such danger in those open hands.
Can’t you hear the quiet composition?

The falsetto pitch and thrust?

Oh, to have that song
running running running through me.

On occasion we have tried to record the music of SSD patients, but upon playback, the recordings contain no sound. Along with no evidence of patients hearing their own skin, the lack of documentation leaves doubt as to if the songs actually exist.

Whether SSD is temporary, permanent or actual is inconclusive.