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These poems explore what it means to be a young woman. They are about a speaker coming to an understanding of the influences that have shaped her, including the cultural influences of myth, art, and sport, and the personal influences of family legend. Many of these poems wrestle with both created and inherited fears, as well as a woman's place as both object and subject of love and sexuality. They attempt to understand both the failures and successes in personal relationships. These poems are about embracing the various facets of life that cage us, and finding small ways to escape.

INSIDE EDGE

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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The Woman Inside the Letters

– After viewing Michal Rovner's *Tfila*

Like walking through
 a heated glacier, there's

a cathedral hush—
 the space draws eyes up,

forces shallow breath.
 Here is the place

to find religion
 from worlds ago, relics

that possess some power
 yet. *Tfila* reminds me at first

of the Rosetta Stone—
 the calligraphic black

lines, repeating,
 a language no longer

known. Made up of strokes,
 no clear order, just

marks like prisoners tick
 off days on cell walls.

But when the lines begin
 to bend, I bend for a better

look—they're people.
 No, one, a woman

dressed all in black,
 repeated. All curl into

bows, straighten, curl
 again in animated

prayer to god knows what.
And it is you. You're
black-robed, dancing
line bowing, bowing,
digitally projected across
the tablet, all moving
but not in unison.
As I watch your figures slither
between cryptic words,
grieving women, and back,
I try to find the cipher
as Europeans
did with Egyptian glyphs.
But all I see
is a woman inside the letters.
And like all women,
you just dance your dance,
continue to grieve,
won't even begin to explain.

I. PREPARATION

I Have Always Feared the Night

I couldn't fall asleep
unless someone held my hand.

Without that touch,
some phantom could find me,
pull me into the television

like that little girl
in a movie I shouldn't
have watched. There have

always been specters
hovering around my bed.
The dreams of Randall:

a crow and rats
in the corn, a long-haired man
in denim and leather.

His black stone a shock
around the neck. I waited
for the other dreams—

an old woman, small and frail
but tough as cotton
field hands, would dispel

the rats with her banjo,
would be my hand of God.
But she never came,

so I convinced myself
the covers could hide me,
even in Southern summers,

complained I had a fever
from the warmth. Because
in my dreams, nothing

appears fated. Not

the way my long paper lantern
became a figure clothed

in white standing over me
for hours one night, or how
this afternoon's nap

became running for locked doors,
or how the specters
have moved, started lingering

outside windows, standing
still, just staring in at me, always
in the corners of my vision,

barely visible in reflected light.
And now I live
on the second floor,

keep the blinds closed.
But someone is always there,
just standing, looking

in at me, nothing but
red behind the eyes.

Grandmother at 96

Does she recognize herself now
in the window of her daughter's back door,
standing by the washing machine not made
by GE or any other American company,

the dark of a back yard she's never
planted, never mowed, pressing in at her?
How many times in the thirty years
she lived alone did she open her garage door,

the way she does now, in my mother's house,
double-checking it's empty? Always,
I'll find her waiting near machines
as if their working, their rubber-footed

surety, could give back *her useful*.
But when the dishes ding clean, not quite
dry, steam lurking inside, she doesn't hear
the chime, misses the changing green light.

So, I keep waiting for the day she's fallen
so far back that she longs for peep-toed heels—
the supportive shoes she's worn as long
as anyone can remember, too thick, too restrained.

Three

Running, sun-reddened feet slap
against the deeper red of bricks.

Heads and torsos slide under,
bob up from the surface. Legs

akimbo; arms arc, twist
into the unnatural blue

of the pool. Always I imagine
the jump. The dry heat in the air,

through tangles of her strawberry
curls, trails behind her as she steals

between knots of adults
unaware with drinks and chatter.

She gains speed. My mother surely
hasn't noticed that she's gone.

The biting smell of chlorine grows
and, as she reaches the edge of the bricks,

the launch. Feet tucked under.
Eyes closed. *Suck in the abandon. Fly.*

The smack of legs, the rush
of displaced water comes all too soon.

Submerged almost before deep breath.
Feet still tucked under, she settles

on the grainy bottom. She opens
her eyes despite the sting, watches

the legs around her push their way
through water. Hair splays across

her face turned toward the gleam

above. She waits. And though my brother,

diving from the board, swims
the entire length of the pool

in one breath to reach her,
she sees none of this. Still sure

that someone will save me.

The Queen of Hysterics

In his painting *Une Leçon Clinique à la Salpêtrière*, Pierre Andre Brouillet painted Jean-Martin Charcot with one of his favorite patient-muses, Marie Wittman, referred to as “Blanche” in Charcot’s writings on hysteria.

Doubled back over the arm of Charcot’s assistant,
her hands roll in, elbows forced out, her fists

clutch air. Hypnotized, eyes half-closed, Marie
performs Blanche. An audience of doctors—

they’re serious men. Some take notes, have furrowed brows,
neat mustaches and full beards, in dark somber suits

with high, winged collars. Charcot faces them, hand outstretched,
lecturing, while Blanche’s white corset—still tied, revealed

by gray bodice rolled down to waist—barely resists
the hysterical backbend: the curve of boning pulls away

from her chest, chemise sleeves drawn off-shoulder.
The daylight from the window accents

the slight shadow of her sternum, the hint of breast,
a woman’s bare skin.

You are one of these men, watching.

Drawn by the brightest white, an almost halo
around her most famous pose: body yielding,

face calm, enticing, almost watching you back.

Ancestry

If, when you look at
the atlas stored away
in the attic, you cannot
find the sand that coats
your feet, remember that
the pages merely draw
the pictures inside mapmakers'
minds, like spotted horses
drawn in caves. Recent
evidence suggests such
horses did exist, but
for centuries many thought
them wishes, dream visions
laid down with amulets
of whale bone. Before
the migration, your people
collected these visions,
these bones, and ground them
to sand in their mouths.

Championship Swim Meet, Montclair Golf Club, 1987

With the smoke from the grill
and a whole morning's worth
of starter pistols in the air,

everyone, even the older girls—
blonde, slim in their suits, diamond
earringed—asked if my brother

would show up. Because then
we would win. He'd walk in
just as the starter whistled

for quiet, slip off shirt, shorts,
shoes, drop them at our chair
as the other boys lined up

behind the blocks, in time
to hear the official *on your mark*.
When the gun I don't remember

ever scaring me fired,
he wasn't the first in the water.
But his dive, with its last-moment

body roll, always shallower
than the rest, learned in Texas
from Olympic hopefuls

volunteering at the Y
for summer break, would always
set him up to win. At the length

of the pool as lap counters
in their Izods and Polos flipped
their pages, Jason had the lead

and the suburban Jersey girls
who loved him chanted his name.
But he never stayed long enough

to claim his trophies. I never
understood. He was worshipped
there. Years later, skeptical he'd avoid

people who adored him,
especially rich girls in swimsuits,
not entirely unlike those

astride sleek bikes or racecars
who lined his walls, I asked how come
he stopped going to the club.

The year before, he explained,
when I'd been five, too young
to remember, he'd brought

a friend from school to swim.
But on their way through the gate,
the manager pulled Jason aside,

shook his hand and held it, clasped
hard, leaning in and hinting
that his friend could stay *this time*,

*but surely someone like that—
dark skin, almond eyes, flat-top—
would feel uncomfortable*

at a club like this. As Jason turned
to see his friend jump in,
the manager smiled, patted his back

and squeezed his hand again.

Peachtree Boulevard

Overlooking the road winding from rink
to hotel, there was a house at the top of a hill,
with a bathtub behind a glass brick wall,
master bath bared over backyard plunge
to traffic. Our pre-teen thirst for scandal
aroused, when we drove past to practice
at six am, or back after evening events,
we'd always watch for this house, hope
to catch the curve the exact moment
the woman we imagined living there stood:
one perfect nude in profile. Usually, the drive
disappointed, dark, presenting a simple room—
we could see the whole thing. Claw-foot tub,
mirrored wall, spa shower in the corner.
And even when we'd round the curve
to find the tub in use, filled, our thrills
displaced by fog. No distinct shape or form.
But still, when I'm in Atlanta, I slow
for that particular hill, hoping for a view.

Persephone's Pomegranate

The skin flushes.

The rind won't
disrobe

like an orange's. Biting in
as one does its unshapely
cousin, the apple, leaves the burst

of juice bitter
with membrane. It should be scored
with a sharp knife, torn

in sections, spread open
and bloody. Splitting the pith takes
experienced hands. Avoid

the stain on mine—
pale and weak, hidden
from the sun for months—

and I hope no one is
watching. It is forbidden
to eat of this place. But a young woman

can get used to anything.
Walking in this grove, the one
ghostly reminder of my mother

above,
how can I refuse
the taste of these seeds, the quick spring

that rushes from their breaking?

II. PRACTICE

Muscle Memory

The ghost of movement in
my arms and legs comes back to me
in quiet moments sitting alone. Gliding, frigid air
ripples a ruffled skirt. The solid comfort
of ice, the home of an inside edge.
At times, even sitting in front of a computer screen,
a middle finger curls toward thumb
for arrondi, or my pointers stretch to allonge.
When sleeping or standing still
for more than a moment, my left leg
crosses my right at the ankle—
jump and spin position. Unbidden,
I'll feel my shoulder move
so slightly as my arm longs
to sweep a circle from my side
over my head, and my hip almost slides
as if to lean into crimson stretch velvet
piped in gold sequins.

Scott Hamilton Backflips at Charlotte Figure Skating Club Session, 1993

In town for a pro-am golf tournament.
In a rink in the basement of a mall
on ice half-melted from skylights.
Three crossovers somehow enough

to propel him from one end
of the ice to the other.

Not much taller than we were.
But his legs, his feet, they cantered,

skipped across the ice. He moved so fast.
We spent most of that hour

pretending to practice. Then Terry had
the nerve to ask.

The way a whisper traveled
between us, the way we backed

to the boards.
He gathered speed—one, two, three laps

dwarfing the entire rink. As his toe pick sunk
into the ice, his body vaulted,

then suspended, upside down,
so close, the moment stretched.

The fear he'd land on something
other than his feet. But then

his hips and knees bent, his toes
struck home beneath him, shards

of ice flared out toward us, and shoppers
above who happened

to walk by and look down

broke into applause.

We stood at the boards,
not quite ready

to join the clapping,
hoped if we were still

enough, he'd do it again.

Fourth Lumbar Vertebra

Hinge of the body.
Source of cambré and
port de bras, layback
spin and spiral. Organic
gimbal. Highest point
of the iliac crest. Rest
for your steady hand.
What gives way when
pleasure rushes.

Dust

I had to cut the headlights halfway up
the gravel drive that circled parking spots
almost down to the beach. A regular
by then, I knew the rules, but when the lights'
coned megaphone dropped silent, I always
needed an extra minute to adjust

to driving into the darkness by the lake
to work skywatching sessions in the chill
that brings crisp stars. I'd sometimes park
too far from where we'd have to set the scope,
too eager not to ruin public views
of planets, stars, a galaxy or two
with flashes of my man-made lights,

giving him a longer trek with all the weight
since I could only manage with the base.
Sometimes the winding lines of gazers formed
before we'd had the time to line up sights,
so he would deal with finding Mars or Venus
while I told jokes to give us time, cautioned
against mistaking planes' blinking headlights
for twinkling lights of stars.

But it's the nights
we didn't work that made us. We'd go
to see the stars ourselves, not have to point
them out, unless we wanted to, to name
our favorite constellations, tell their stories:
Cassiopeia's pride, the seven sisters of
the Pleiades, Orion and his bull, and one
or two he'd make up on the spot.

I'd lean
against his chest. He'd wrap a tartan blanket
around us both. With my head resting on
his chin, our eyes on the sky, he weaved new histories
for me, in the shining dust of smaller stars,
invisible on every other night
spent in the closer, lesser lights.

I felt
the weight of him, his solid form, the chest
earned in teenage summers spent picking
cotton and getting to know this sky. And as
I looked up at the stars, distant images
of long ago, shrunk by space, though
all I could see was light and dark and dust,

he, his chest, his voice were there, beating
through me. Somehow, though, even then, I knew
he wouldn't be for long, soon I'd sit in sand
alone. I still leaned back to watch the sky.

Michelle Kwan

i. the signature spiral

Switching edges takes
the entire body: a lean

in the shoulders
for the inside edge opening,

stretching across the chest

to the outside edge, the knee
bending just as her weight slides

across the flat, her free leg
a rudder balancing with pointed toe.

But the beauty that makes
this move a signature is not only

the lovely position of her leg,
shoulders, back. More, it is

the expression on her face:
when she launches into

a crescendo, she's open-mouthed
and smiling. And all I know is

no one can deny her skill
because no one can deny her love

of the ice—her arms flung wide,
as if to embrace the biting slice of air

she's propelling through.

ii. footwork

A twisting serpentine
or straight-line of turns,

arm movements, edges
no less complex

than death drop, or quadruple jump:
she stays grounded, deep

in the bend of a knee, grinding
the crunch of each curve.

Through flip turns, split
falling leafs, and mohawks,

she manages to pick up speed
even scratching the ice

with her toe pick teeth.
When she works her feet

across the ice, everyone cheers,
a clapping, rooting din swells,

echoes around the arena.
The precision of edges,

speed of turns—even the fan
in the farthest seat can see

she was meant for this.

Skating in a Spotlight

is really more like skating
in the dark. The tundra
painted blue-white over sand
and antifreeze, the red
and blue lines marking off-sides
dissolve to an indigo murk
like a wash from watercolors.
Inside the cone of light
you alone cannot see, try
to let your muscles remember
with no discernable cues
around you. Lit only by windows,
the yellow tones of sunlight
blinding, slats in the roof,
shadowy figures of an audience
swim in Indian ink. Plexiglas
mutes applause, and though
the speaker system plays it the same,
your music sounds numbed, just
beyond your reach. Relax. Skate.
Even when the entire biome you know
appears in shadow like the chair and toys
in your childhood bedroom
that always became a monster in the dark.

As My Grandmother Hopes the Good Lord Will Take Her Soon

My mother asks me, again, to kill her
if she ever gets this way. She doesn't

mean go out, get a permit, wait thirty
days, buy a handgun, load the magazine,

and shoot. But I wonder if she imagines
doing that herself. If, when her own

aging mother decides to take a break
from thyroid medication to save

that money, she feels the steel
in her hand. Or when my grandmother

insists we've never taken her to the ER,
that she didn't call home five years ago

feeling faint from merely walking
her retirement village, when she

refuses our retelling how we sat
with her catheterized for hours

while doctors ran every test
just to discover she'd missed a change

in dosage, taking too little for days
on end, causing herself exhaustion,

does mom sometimes hear the click
of a bullet sliding into the chamber?

I always hope when I visit home
that she's not that bad, the doctors

are right, we should all be so lucky
to live so long without broken hips,

to be walking on our own at 96.

But just as I come through the door,

she'll wonder how I've gotten so much taller
than my mom, shorter since I was twelve,

of if I didn't used to have red hair. She'll hide
in the hallway between the family room

and hers, wait for us to leave so she can dig
for M&Ms in the candy jar or brownies

she stashes in her shirt for later. She'll fart
so loud it wakes my father snoozing

on the couch, he'll catch her stealing sweets
without a plate, which really we all do,

but ask her what she's doing and the look
on her face—we can't tell if she even knows.

And nothing any of us do seems right:
my brother's beef wellington at Christmas

he spent three days preparing was just too much,
so she ate a plastic cup of fruit instead.

She frets each time I leave, asks again how long
a drive it is, if I'm safe to drive at night, in rain.

When I pick up my purse, bags in the car,
she tears up, says how good it's been to see me,

wishes I didn't have to leave so soon though
she can't quite seem to remember my name.

And all I can think is how frustrating this is.
All I can hear is my mom saying, *Please:*

If I ever do this to you, just shoot me, please,
as the door to the garage bangs shut.

Office at Night

– *after Edward Hopper*

The breeze from an L train
ripples fabric
across her thighs,
a swath of Prussian blue
drawing the eyes
of strangers around
her lumbar curve,
up her ghostly arm, her breasts, red lips
in a small, suffocated room
of odd angles, green
carpet, warm mahogany.
Her blue dress
is a cool breath.
Her eyes, cast down—
the paper
the train's passing
drifted off the boss's desk.
He reads
with more intent
than late hours at work
are worth.
A streetlight outside
bands the wall, connects them
without his knowledge.
But her face half
shadowed, her object
unclear, when she bends
for that paper, whose eyes
is she after?

Paris Pursuit

I don't know how this began this walk at a run or when
the rain stopped but I see his face a man on the bridge

outside des Invalides slip through tourists hands fisted walk
at a run I need someone to save me fingernails dig into

palms the Champs-Élysées find a crowd know my red
raincoat stands out his hand his reach toward me halfway

to the Arc de Triomphe turn back unsure his smile behind
me the rain has stopped hands fisted in a Quick Burger

watching for his face the window do I need someone to save me

Runaway

In her mid-twenties in the thirties, barefoot,
running down the drive, plain dress.

Middle child of ten, four who didn't make it, maybe
she thinks it'll be a blessing for her disapproving parents.

His blues music never did sit well with them.

The places he took her would not have made the grade
in her family of prim schoolteachers, something
she hopes not to have to do again. Of course

he was exciting: waiting in a running car,
the way to California, far from her mother's farm,

the chickens and her little siblings waiting to be fed.

She must have been something, the pinned-back hair
she would later have washed and styled weekly in town

breaking loose and curling from sweat, little twigs
caught in her skirt, her whole life ahead
in the shape of a man in a Buick sedan.

Kevin

Three nights in the Millenium
Hilton, lower Manhattan, a few
blocks from Battery Park, across

the street from Ground Zero,
empty pit then, the memorial
going up now. First stop always

the Statue of Liberty, to prove
to myself I was there, really there,
in the city I've loved since

before I can remember, first call
always to you, somewhere backstage,
working tables for extra money,

sleeping off last night's girl
at your place in Long Island City.
We'd plan to meet between

my shopping and museum trips,
you'd promise to work me in
and wear me out. Kevin, remember:

we met in a bar one night
five summers ago. You don't have
to take me for Mexican in the Village

or dessert at Magnolia.
I want nothing more from you
than the slip-in to my room

between rehearsals the very
morning of my flight home.

III. FAITH

Sex & Letter Forms

“Geofroy Tory argued that letters should reflect the ideal human body. Regarding the letter A, he wrote: ‘the cross-stroke covers the man’s organ of generation, to signify that Modesty and Chastity are required, before all else, in those who seek acquaintance with well-shaped letters”

- Ellen Lupton, *thinking with type*

Now, when I see

a capital A, I can’t help but picture
the Vitruvian Man: midsection

chaste behind a crossbar,
head encased in a coned Puritan’s hat at cap height.

I think of the bathroom light
that passes your naked body—
your silhouetted legs straddling

hallway and floor,
base molding meeting one knee,
the other thigh. The perfect italic A.

In a classics course I once took,
the professor argued that Sumerian
cuneiform developed

from pictographs of
the human body. And I’ve read
Chinese characters reflect

people in stylized forms.

As I watch, you turn, the spine
of your letter slides to an l,
the serifs of your particular type

too large, but elegant and
newly clean. So the body must
be read as microcosm for the universe,
the ultimate shape of text,
and this is the ideal:
my flamenco-dancer leg,
broad and outward-thrusted
(like that of a capital R)
escaping your sheets
and the O that leaves
everything bared.

Googling My Grandfather

There's still an Edward Gee in San Francisco—
a partner in an architecture firm.
I like to think that would please my grandfather,
another man making things in his name
in the city he once called home—the city where
he became a father between the victory in Europe
and the surrender of Japan though he
would rather have been over there, with his
buddies, to do a man's duty, color-blindness
and all.

I wonder if that Ed too plays
the trumpet, pronounces his surname with the same
hard-G. And I hope he sometimes builds with
his own two hands. That his kitchen, porch
and shed are each a slightly different, clashing
shade of blue, and somewhere in his foyer stands
a set of stainless steel serving ware
he made himself. A set his wife will point
to almost thirty years after he's
passed, just to say, *my Eddie made that*.

At least three Edward Gees live in Missouri,
the state he came home to, wife and baby
daughter in tow, when the Navy shipyards no
longer needed civilians. The one who tweets
from Saint Louis, a facilities consultant, might
have wide feet and love jazz, maybe eloped
with a girl whose family didn't approve, and knows
what it's like to comfort his five year old child after
her mother, raised on a farm, slaughtered the chicken
she'd made her friend. But his feed never mentions
Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker or Cab Calloway.

In North Carolina even, there's an Ed Gee
who went to my university, got an MBA
before I was born, works in market research.
I'd like to ask him if he takes his eldest grandson
fishing on weekends like he took his daughter, and if
his wife cooks carp for him Saturday nights
though she never liked the taste. Or what

it's like to melt down metals, mold their forms,
piece together components and see a ship
or car take shape. I'd like to know how it felt
to hold his first two grandsons. Or what
he would say to the third, the one he never met,
the one his daughter says moves like him,
laughs like him, analyzes the world in the same
Type A engineer way like him. Or what
he would've said about me, the granddaughter
who tries to build ships that sail on words.

Persephone to Orpheus

All come here in the end: mist
where once there was a form,
shades of a body once flesh. If

you look closely, you'll discern
some reflection of the souls they
once were. Not that they'll remember,

but some shades seem darker,
some lighter. Take your wife:
Still limping from her viper bite,

her color more lilac than gray,
she must have been splendid

above. Hardly older than I was
when I first walked these silent
groves alone. Of course you would

come to claim her. Funny, she made
no mention of you. She stood
mute before my iron throne

like the others. The winter months
pass this way: quiet, countless dead
lingering at my feet, afraid to speak.

Even when my husband called me
to his side to greet you—come

to drag another woman from her home—
he used their name for me, his
muffled voice more blow than kiss.

Do you know I've become
his *Iron Queen*? Cruel, isn't it?
So when I smelled you, alive, all musk

and the wood of your kithara,
and heard your song, sadness ringing

through the fields bringing light and tears

to all the shadows, I could deny you
nothing. You made me remember.

But how could I really let her go,
knowing she would have you?

To End the Hibernation

- after Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring*

Soon the ancestral bears
 will wake by energy from the sun,
 will rise from the other world

 to live the hunt again.
 They will take the girl who falls,
 a seed to bring back the Spring.

The girls tempt each other,
 weaving in, out of a ritual
 circle, dancing so quickly

 any girl could trip. Their
 tribe bends as if diving back
 to dust, stamping the ground

to warm the female soil.
 When the Chosen One falls, twice, the rest
 of the girls attack, their arms

 harsh as music's alarm.
 She, whirled out of the circle,
 stills, already almost

spent as the bears crawl up
 from the earth, men in bear-hides surround
 her, and all falls silent. All

 movement stops to see her
 dance to her death: she leaps. Leaps
 again and again. In

sets of three, repeated
 with her musical motif, she leaps,
 arm waving, asking the sun

 to save her, she wishes
 the earth will claim her faster.
 In a knee-knocking show

of trembling, leaps again,
 exhausted, frantic, she leaps once more,
 into the arms of the bears
 who raise her to the sun.

The Day of Your Wedding

Water streamed through a low showerhead,
a hard arc splattering off my shoulders

in the tiny bathroom of the downtown duplex
you'd never seen, will never see, and something

gave way. I turned to face the rush, hands braced
on tile. In that space, five states away from you,

in a different shower in a different city
from all the places we shared, I let myself

imagine you. Water moving over the pieces
I chose to remember—down the slanted arrow

of your back, the pools in your eyebrows,
the shallows between your neck, shoulders,

and ribs, angling off your thighs. I opened
my eyes, turned off the faucet. The rest

I let myself forget.

I-85 South at Sundown

I drive through a flock of birds.
They drop from an overpass,
cross close to the highway,
and headed shrubs inside the cloverleaf ramp.
In dwindling light,
landing in a mass, they look
more like bats than common
nighthawks, covering
the loop's slick leaves—
probably Japanese Barberry,
promoted as highway plants
in North Carolina for *exceptional*
fall color and conspicuous fruit.

And I think of the botanical garden
in Istanbul, growing inside
a much larger loop—it
fills the urban void of
an even more congested city with plants
to *combat soil erosion*, and
fight disease. People stop there
to be rejuvenated, to forget
what it is to live
in a large city and spend
too much time driving
alone, maybe even to forget
ancestral conflicts
encircling that shelter.

But here, windows closed, I
drive through these birds
and wonder
what sound they make:
Perhaps bill-clatters, like
the machine gun fire
of a stork. As a flock
would they drown out
the highway?
I can't be sure. But something
in the way they rush by, within feet
of my fender, reminds me
of the Sacrificial Dance
in Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The choreographer's
sister, Bronislava Nijinska,
the original Chosen One,
described the dancer's trembling
like that of a large bird
building a nest:
in a low arabesque,
she stamps the ground,
beats her hands against
bent knees, beats her arms
against the floor like clumsy wings.
And this is what we do:
make homes out of dangerous fates
even as we try to break away from them.

The Chosen One jumps and flails,
the same clumsy wings not able
to support her weight because
she's trying to fly away
but her role is to leap until
everything goes out of her,
until she falls
and joins the ancestors
who've been holding her hostage.