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This collection examines, but does not conclusively solve, a battery of problems including but not limited to existential angst, idiopathic exhaustion and unrelenting hopelessness, internal conflicts between sexual orientation and religion, external conflicts regarding sexual orientation and religion, consequent estrangements and emotional difficulties, the phenomenon of viewing the body as separate from the self, the difficulties of fraught relationships with former lovers, the drawing of parallels between the Mother of Christ and the speaker's own mother, and the errant perception of cosmic guidance in the daily activities of chickens. Results are inconclusive. There is no conclusion.

ELECTRIC ANIMAL

by

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Approved by

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*For Emma Emory and Chelsea Pierson*

APPROVAL PAGE

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I.

## **Inertia: Family History**

I was seven  
there was a telephone pole  
and metal like crumpled shining tissue paper

that blew by the backseat window  
and we drove by and my dad said that it wasn't the crash  
and the glass-shattering halt that killed you but that you kept going brain into skull,  
skull into windshield,  
windshield into sharp-edged snow  
glittering over the asphalt long after the sirens and tow trucks had gone.

I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up.  
After that I kept thinking, going headlong past my father's aneurysms  
and calcified valves,  
my mother's dust-bones, my cousin searching for reflections  
in pools of well whiskey, drinking them down, seeing nothing.

I imagined hurtling into rare and spectacular cancers –  
the one that wrapped around the spine like the snake on the staff,  
spider-legged masses spinning vascularized webs that caught my mother midair,

and I thought of that last inward breath – that momentary cradling of visceral peace  
knowing it was there  
but that I'd built too much speed to stop.

## **Bildungsroman**

I didn't question  
the unknown hollows  
of my body, didn't ponder the emptiness  
of the rabbit hutch with the rusted wire,  
wine glasses turned on their mouths  
on the high shelf  
I couldn't reach. I built tiny houses  
of mud and broken sticks,  
each room enough for a sparrow.  
I caught the caterpillars  
of gypsy moths, watched them spin white  
and emerge winged, leaving the torn cocoon.

I came to love  
my body that wouldn't bleed,  
the blighted ovaries  
carrying their strands of south-sea pearls,  
understood the calls  
of nestless birds, their porous bones lifted  
with air, seeking hollowness in another.

## Second Sky

This girl gives me a vodka tonic and I keep  
stirring it. She's laughing  
at something I've said, her face taking on the neon  
and shadow of the signs in the window. The music is too loud  
and I keep looking past her to where the trees are black veins  
in a halogen sky. We talk about the paint curling from the ceiling – its paint continents,  
its unpaint oceans. Now  
she's leaving. I stay: a pointless inertia,  
a stupid kind of distance. Her stride is pressing the ground  
between missing floorboards,  
her palm flush  
with the door, opening  
to a rectangle of cricket song  
and blue dark: the dark  
of the middle of a river. Someone's  
scrawled *beautiful*  
*and didn't hurt* on the wall.  
The cocktail stirrers drift amidst semicircles  
of lemon, bright bitter skin.

## Birth of the Body

Had I known then what it was to want  
I would not have wanted any of it  
the body growing within yours  
cell over cell

Not long after it began to pulsate small stars  
of cardiac muscle clenching releasing  
unsunned skin buried white bone its eyes  
saw nothing the body was not yet tired

and finally it broke from the long incision across your belly  
like a vernixed bloom was pulled screaming  
into a foreign air its legs churning  
neither of us could stop it

## Citron

You had a dream about an egg            opened a glass door to the yellow Styrofoam  
I am standing in a stairwell            a lemon candy stinging my tongue  
          its color at once the color            of living and of the dying grasses  
of winter            I could not tell you the sharpness of it  
          and there was an egg with a thin cracked shell  
          and this was the one you chose            the inside of it pouring itself

into your tired palm            your voice beginning to waver like thick bright water you  
          asked if you could replace it    asking *are you*            though the answer is  
          something you know            and I already am picturing you Sundays  
lighting a candle            asking *what kind of death*  
          as the color carried the heavy light            of wet enamel.

## Intervention

When one said *I hope you understand*  
*I can't sit at the same table as you* while staring  
into the rumpled corner of a stained rug

and another talked about the Vatican as the dog  
lapped water and the sound grew louder

and another peeled an orange  
with his thumbnails, would not meet my gaze

I slept with the quilt over my closed eyes, sinking  
into a shrunken world, the dark microcosm of it

and woke to the sun splintering through the blinds,  
floor opening into fissures of light.





## The Body as Radiograph

You said you hated                    how the soft oblong rooms  
of your lungs kept filling                    unfilling  
                  without your permission                    and so I told you  
how the x-rays had made the bones                    of the body glow

like vellum lit with white fireflies                    and ringed in translucent halos  
                  of muscle                    ligament                    and we kept driving  
and we laughed                    at a torn billboard                    and you rolled up the windows  
like you wanted to hold in the sound                    I knew  
you'd dream again of spent casings                    that my nightmares  
would come back like horrible children opening  
their blank eyes underground                    waking the body in a hot swath of pulse

and sweat                    but for now                    the road moves under us and there  
is a hill so steep that if the brakes give out now  
we'll die running red  
light                    after light                    after light

## The Virgin Mary Above the Doors of Our Lady of Grace Church

Holy Mother when I saw you last it was from across  
the highway you nested like a stone hawk  
in a stone cliff the color of each becoming the other

If I stood farther away  
I would no longer see you your body  
still vaster than mine hands opening

to a ground you don't touch eyes the faces of sand  
colored planets that turn toward me without light

## Silver Strand

The whirl of spokes  
over pavement and the heavy arms  
of conifers filtering sun  
into needles of light  
and the sound of our laughter  
when we could barely see the sky  
and the tires slowing in sand  
as we drifted into something vaster:

all of it beautiful – the water's  
Pacific shimmer, beach  
near-empty, the shells  
of lifeguard stands like big, hollow-eyed  
shorebirds on painted legs. They stood  
in pools of parched seaweed where plovers came to rest.

I touched the water – despite  
the white-gold sun, its sudden  
cold reached deeper than I'd thought possible.  
My salt-wet fingers numbed in the wind,  
and then the ache  
dissipated in the air between us.

## The Body as Animus

and somewhere                      a taut collective of nerve  
    asking *what body*

what self                      what creature is it  
that tenses      its fingers curling                      to palms  
small bodies kneeling                      and a gaze from the worn-out couch  
unwavering                      cold                      in the body there is a blur

of imagining  
one-two                      right hook                      to the jaw  
unmoving                      against other still bodies

## Photosynthesis, Turning

You, a sapling curled  
for lack of light            toward what it is

          it can touch. Sugar from sun.  
Sugar from nothing, from the air

that moves through you almost  
without sound. As you sleep,

          I look to the window, the soft moons of streetlights  
drawing moths outside.

When you wake            it will be slow, and you  
will touch your eyelids with the same

slender hands that will again move  
through my body, reaching blindly  
for something: not this, not me.

## Treating the Chickens for Mites on the Back Porch

When the silked undersides  
of feathers become a forest  
of small amber teardrop-creatures, I bring  
the chickens to the porch. I wear a ripped sweatshirt,  
fill the lit ghosts of trash bags  
with industrial pesticide strong enough  
to kill a cat, but not  
the birds with reptilian legs, birds primitive,  
their beaks spearlike. The industrial pesticide is flour-soft  
and almost innocent when the porch lamp catches it.  
The bags swallow the chickens one after another. Their heads  
on the outside, they stand still, eyes dark  
with sleep. I shake the dust  
into their feathers like dry rain. They step  
into the henhouse, peppered with neurotoxic snow. They settle.

In the morning you are still gone and the sun  
is pouring over a shattered glass of dew. The chickens  
step scale-footed outside,  
stand blank in the face of dawn.



## Dream Sequence

I.

There was a sound of breaking ceramic and a family minus me at a too-small table, and somewhere there was lemonade and my perfume, the one that used to be in the empty bottle I still keep. You sat down across from me at the empty end of the too-small table and nobody looked at me, or you, or me looking across at you. I told you there was a store next to us when you asked what was happening. The store was out of business and I was farewelling the customers with the lemonade and the perfume. It made no sense but you understood, lucid and still, your navy blue dress silhouetting you against the eggshell walls.

II.

The same store with different shelves and different inventory, where I got lost in the aisles, hid in the shelves behind toilet-paper forts. The store is dark and mostly empty. Handwritten signs where the bags of pre-shredded salad lettuce used to be. Industrial, clear bottles of pink-dyed malt liquor in the deli, next to going-out-of-business signs. There's always a crowd. It's impossible to find the doors.

III.

I got dressed and left. There was a quiet room of people, and you. No breaking ceramic, or small table, or stores going out of business. You weren't wearing the blue dress, either. You wore something different, though I can't remember what. You left a note in the room, something inconsequential, something not even for me. Even the penciled arc of your handwriting, confident but with a slight shake, deepens the strange dull ache at the base of my throat. There's a wasp hovering at the window, its body sinister and smooth, black as a Grecian vase. I want to warn you. I don't.



## Escapism

Momentarily I have diffused  
to the walls                      but of course in waking

the body is inevitable    my restlessness  
in its confines              I think of ripping it

at imagined seams                      and like an ingrate  
leaving it                      abandoning its lightless

sinews, myofascia              that have carried me uncomplaining  
for years,                      bones the buried

white roots of trees                      if I could speak  
without the body I would tell it                      *not enough* —

I have asked endlessly what I would look like without it  
if I hid it beneath the ground                      if I stayed there with it.

**Catholic Catechism, 2357**

Say *intrinsically disordered*      say *contrary to the natural law*      this is not  
something you have felt—  
weight of the sacred scripture a weight turned      on itself:

could I have answered back with the litany of names  
who flung themselves from bridges      slipped their faces into the horrible  
embrace of ropes      were they winged finally  
when they left the earth with their feet touching only air  
under the rough braided halos?

## The Body as Dismembered Doll in Ivy

Tangle of brown hair                      of oak leaves  
    of stems like the legs of spiders what    decay what body  
    lives in this immortal sort of brokenness                      what hand is it  
that disarticulated unblemished leg                      from unblemished torso

head pulled like a grape                      from the vine  
    I imagine it years                      underground  
    facing its smooth ankles                      eyelids still open

## Birthrights

My mother said later *you were wanted* —  
she told me the story of the silver Jetta,  
its rolling into a ditch,  
its tin-foil crumpling. At twenty I drove a silver Honda.  
The only times I prayed, I asked  
that it would swerve senselessly and catapult me  
into some uncertain dark.

They took her to a hospital after and searched for a heartbeat,  
my heartbeat. They couldn't find it. And then they did.  
and years after I tired of the same pulse, its unrelentingness.

In the baby picture I remember, my mother is still on the operating table  
and I am screaming and smeared red. She said my crown of bruises  
dissipated in hours. When I swam in the crowdless pool  
in waning summer, I flattened myself to the bottom  
until my legs went weak. I always pushed upward  
in the end, clear membrane of water  
breaking over my upturned face before the reluctant inhale.

II.

## Confiteor

The first time I fucked  
a woman with a crucifix around  
my neck, it felt like  
sacrilege. After, I looked  
in the mirror and saw the thin river  
of chain, the body of Christ  
glossed in sweat and 14 karat gold.  
I stared into the eye-glint of the cross.

When she had gone  
to light a cigarette  
on the front porch,  
I stood in the white curtained room  
of the shower, heard *wash away my iniquity cleanse me*  
*from my sin* in the quiet steaming air, remembered  
the voice of the parish priest  
as my child-hands held holy water  
in a shallow silver pan beside the altar,

but her hands shone with seven stars  
and the two mouths  
saying *touch Me and see,*  
*for a spirit does not have flesh*  
*and bones* *as you see that I have.*

## Chroma Kaleidoscope

In the aisle seat of a Greyhound bus there is a man  
who has seen the colors of souls:  
through the thick lens  
of peyote, they flicker beneath rib-slats.  
I have given myself permission  
to believe him. *Yours*  
*would be a different color*  
*than mine*, he says.  
I want to ask what color  
and then don't.  
I am wondering if the colors  
of souls change over time.  
Once, I watched  
my mother's shadow stretch  
and curl itself, covering everything,  
then leaving it.  
I stood where she had, turning  
the ground the same darker shade. I looked  
at our shadows and the light between them.  
The man is going from Mississippi  
to New York. We drink  
from my flask when the bus arrives in time  
for the transfer, and the liquor is colorless  
and sears under my sternum. In the terminal,  
a mother slaps her small daughter  
and the child wails, steps closer.

## The New World

Before anyone  
knew anything  
else, the earth  
was a plate  
afloat  
in nothing.  
Bone china  
on blue, concentric  
circles caging its sides,  
dark detail  
of flowers  
rippling its center.

If we wanted  
an end  
we'd find it —  
wooden vessels reaching  
the plate's edge  
and falling into  
dead space,  
taut sails  
collapsing  
like lungs.

Until someone  
tried,  
and we found  
ourselves instead  
afloat  
in the albumen  
beneath a cold shell  
nobody could touch.

It's interminable now.  
The trees are still  
with leaves burnished  
on the bend  
and rise of the hill,  
the slow  
hurtling arc of the world.



## The Body as New Calendar Year

And how many years until knees can no longer stop their sounds  
of the tectonics of cartilage the wearing of plate edges  
this slower erosion

and the body will not regenerate itself  
but continue collecting memories of severance  
the calloused bone that resorbs slowly  
more slowly

and the interminable dervish turns  
of the hands of clocks that have taunted  
the body for years

and is it too much to stand in the empty room its floor sweet  
with spilled champagne and wait for that bleak horizon

## Almost-Elegy

A drunk jumped in front of your car  
and you said he'd been running  
into the street all day — layer on layer  
of some ache he'd lost the words for —  
and when I walked  
through the lit grid of the intersection  
something was changed:  
the soft gravity like a gypsy moth to lamplight.  
How is it that I pull anything  
toward the space of my wanting? There is a dream  
where I close my eyes in front of a train  
and open them in the inside of a blue china bowl  
and there are yellow numbers adrift  
    like fireflies. I think *regret has a taste*  
    *like burnt cinnamon,*  
and the quiet is terrible, my hands outstretched to trace  
the bowl's stinging contours,           the irreparable architecture of loss.  
I didn't understand  
the phrase *need gone* until I heard it spoken,  
two syllables like the tapping of fingernails on a veneered desk,  
the man's footsteps on asphalt, a crescendo  
of *need gone*     the exhale when the car stopped short.

## The Virgin Mary Survives the Storm

Holy Mother when the tornado leveled our school on a Sunday night  
and no one was there to be hurt our mother called it a miracle

or a blessing or maybe said nothing but we all knew

I stared into the television and I saw my little brother's

classroom steel beams collapsed where his desk had been. When we stood before  
the rubble I saw your statue outside where the doors were once your one

hand missing the other extending toward me as if in giving alms your  
insides white particulate with the same dust that covered

the bricks the soles of my shoes the body  
of the building like a gutted animal broken  
and angular the slow arc of your sunbleached back

## Ending

You asked *what is it like* and I told you  
*Sometimes it's just enough*  
*to move through the aisles*  
*of a grocery store without disintegrating.*  
I told you to think of lurching  
through new red lights, a manic kind of hopelessness.  
I told you to think about the threadless spools  
of wheels spinning dust and air.

I wanted to tell you  
in Norse myth, something horrible  
is chained. I wanted  
to ask *how does anyone live*  
*with that sort of terror, anyway*  
but at the end the chain breaks, and everything  
is destroyed— the gods, all of it.  
Mornings, light skewers  
the prescription vials on my desk.  
In another Norse legend, a wolf swallows the sun.

## Questions for God

Have I grown smaller,           frailer           because I am faithless  
    every part of me has become empty:  
wanting something and never knowing what           an acute kind of longing  
    sharp but inarticulate           why is it that when I say your name  
I hear no answer           I have watched the wings of birds for years.



## Soapstone

You write to me about the whirl  
of diamond-tipped saws  
in a cold quarry. You wear masks,  
goggles, but the dust  
always finds its way through – a fine  
white snow clouding your lungs, covering  
your body until you're moving white marble.  
*I didn't like how it brought out the lines in my face,* you said.  
*Then I was too tired to care.* You slept,  
dreamed the violinist touched you  
through a kind of numbness.  
Some days, you look in on her,  
the lines in her face.  
You hope she is dead  
because she wants so badly  
to be dead. You tell her  
to eat. Her skin is like paper. Her jewelry,  
her expensive clothes – all of it  
untouched. Some days  
she can barely stand. You tell me  
about the sound of the saws,  
an incredible noise. I picture them  
mutilating the white faces  
of rock. *You can find a saw to cut*  
*anything,* you tell me. Perpetual bodies  
of stones – these  
of all things I'd thought were safe.

## Epistolary

How to explain the color  
of sound to a woman who is deaf. How to capture  
the contours of a room  
for the blind woman, who cannot know them  
without touch—                      when you said my body

had forsaken the Lord,                      and maybe you, too,  
I felt that there was something broken,  
though I couldn't say what, or where.

\*

Do you know that when I stand in the lurid glow  
of a barroom light, talking to a woman whose name I will not remember  
or maybe never knew,                      I hope her voice will be the one  
that erases yours?                      This is why  
I stand staring at clocks willing the sharp hands  
back,                      though I know they can never know how.



## Genesis

And on our seventh day I wake to smoke tangling itself  
in the air above your lips and the salt sting of tequila  
on the bedside table and I convince myself that it takes only so many things

to make heaven          I imagine myself  
pressing into your wood floors  
the knots and whorls burning themselves into my fingertips  
my body feeling the weight of the soft soles  
of your feet in the wet heat of summer

until I remember that no amount of wanting  
can make illusion whole          that the body's ache  
does not heal its emptiness  
that I will pull myself from the floor, shoulders sticking  
with sweat, that the air in your throat  
will push outward despite itself  
toward something distant          and invisible.

## The Body as Cotard's Delusion

Already the body has forgotten itself  
in a house with a roof strung in lights  
and the back porch with its colony  
of lemon balm mint tiny rosebushes  
rooted in soil soil in pots  
the pots moveable the plants unaware  
that the body has become a telegram  
ricocheting along the lone thread of wire  
its arms have become unseeable  
its water-bones, its skin like air  
transfiguring itself to weightlessness  
to small fractions of sky



### Elegy for M.M.T., 1990-2007

All I knew: you, a rifle, woods.  
At your funeral, no one found the right words, my  
*I'm so sorry* to your father falling  
like a bad punch line. Your eulogies mentioned hot peppers,  
green eyes. After,  
I dreamed I was you, suspended  
in silent blue space, yellow numbers  
surrounding like stars. An overwhelming  
*I'm so sorry* – the me that was you  
knew it was irrevocable, and I woke  
steeped in regret. I committed  
your too-short obituary to memory. For months  
there were questions, always asked  
in a kind of hush. No note. At your funeral,  
I stared unbelieving  
at the little box of ash  
that was you. Its sides were etched  
in the outlines of trees, their empty branches  
small hands: perfect, still.



**There is a Wildness in My Want of Answer**

When I ask if there is a God—  
a wildness and also an incredible fear

the feeling of cradling a telephone as it rings endlessly  
the ringing has made itself the sound of cicadas  
sinking into everything becoming part of all of it

I cannot imagine its stopping  
falling into a silence like winter I cannot take

the answer I cannot hear any answer no matter the words that carry it.

# III.

## The Body as Trail Run

Having learned early            utopia only translates to *nowhere*  
the body moves forward        endless over packed ground

over roots scarred deep enough        to see the white fibers of their cores  
over wooded hills        through the churned red clay after rain  
each wave of its exhaustion    is not enough to stop

the desperation                    in the unending arc of earth  
its impact rattling            against the sinewed web  
of metatarsals            the almost hourglass    of tibia  
which looks for weightlessness  
in the short silence            between strides



## Epistle

When I leave you there will be  
no sound, only  
the deep heat  
of ocean rifts, a heat that dissipates  
in the cold sea around  
and over it, though it pulses constant,  
in its dark confluence of liquid  
and sands pulled from shore.

Your saltwater sweat  
enough to sting a wound: to rest  
in the blood-metal parting  
of a skin that will forget you, and seal itself.

There is nothing  
you need to say. Whatever ache  
you leave adrift  
in the chilled tide of your absence  
is enough.

## Listening to the Jonestown Death Tapes

A voice through a microphone says *burry my children burry*  
and then there's the slow rise  
of tidal sound, at first  
unrecognizable, and it takes  
until its first charged lull  
to understand it's screaming.

The voice is the kind that could coax a scared horse onto a trailer:  
*Quickly quickly quickly quickly quickly.*  
A child shrieks.

*This world's not our home*

*assure these children  
of the relaxation of stepping over to the next plane*

There is music playing softly, an exhalation of almost-harmony.

*take our life from us,*  
Someone is singing.

*we lay it down,*  
A faint discordance of sighs.

*we got tired.*

A shimmering of static. The tape rattles, runs out.

## The Body Mid-River

It is not until the center of the swim that the body realizes  
the salt in its eyes the futility of stroke  
after stroke it thinks only of the softness  
of the mud at the river's floor softer than silk velvet  
how no more than a long exhale separates it from rest

Someone dredged this river once it was years ago  
found a bicycle the front wall of a mobile home  
two bodies like this one lungs heavy with the water's polluted churn  
I did not ask how they landed or the speed of their sinking  
that gradual cold gradual dark

## Before Leaving

And what is an ending if not a severance— a slow  
sharp parting to the tired sides of knives  
or oceans, and I am saying I will miss the mountains,  
their blue-shrouded tops vague enough to make into anything  
I would want. Is it the plains and their desolation  
that have turned me afraid —  
like the flattened bowl of belly between iliac crests  
or the sound of your words swallowed in air?

This is not something I have told you—  
not a question you could answer.

## The Body as Seizure

In its static dreaming                    the body sees a city  
    white buildings                        floating red orbs    stippling sky

sees a swirl of deep loam pockmarked                    with yellow jewels  
    of eyes                    hears a scream where there is no scream

but only mute terror                    finger-prickle  
    over its head                    vision blurring into sudden light  
in the body's waking                    the spine presses to floor  
    the room finds color again                    finds sound

its eyes are open                    unrelenting  
    wanting the worldless collapse  
to be for another moment falling                    to anesthetic dark

## **Freya Roams the Nine Worlds**

Proximity alone drew you together  
you said, and my mother told me once

that it was the moon that pulled the tide  
to shore, though the tide

didn't know it. I imagined the ocean itself lost  
and spilling flat and mirrored on the coast,

its rivulets fingers, blind  
with the lightless sky. The moon circling

some foreign planet, still far  
from its indifferent surface.

I have no pictures of you.  
When I walk past the dark jetties

hemming the uncertain body  
of the Atlantic, the stones begin

to take on the shape  
of your hipbones, knife-edges opening  
to the water even as they channel it home.

## The Virgin Mary Stands in the Hamilton Window of St. Ignatius Chapel Point

Holy Mother when the sun rose  
and filled you with light your cloak was bluer than any river  
sky behind you striated with storm then your soft halo edged

in black the heart radiant bare  
shot through with roots but nothing like earth  
the impassive eyes nose aquiline  
face a quarter in shadow

the blue cloak draping the red surge of your robe  
and your feet grounded  
I did not know if you stood on rock or cloud







## Two Trees

*Arbor vitae*, meaning *tree of life*:  
rooted in the sagittal section  
of sheep's brain –  
little cerebellum and  
white-matter trunk,  
white branches tucked within it.  
The branches bare, as in winter.

Another, in the Kaballah – perfect  
orbs suspended, tied  
to the ceiling, to each other.  
Tattooed in the characters of a language  
whose characters were indecipherable.

Its intricacy mesmerized: no roots,  
no reaching branches. The strings  
between spheres held like taut sinews  
with no need for beginning or end.

Yours a galaxy, stretch of strange planets  
holding each other aloft.  
Mine a single, irreversible cut.

### **Bike Lane Pastoral**

I meant to tell you all of it:  
whir of wheels  
over asphalt, sun  
on my hands, ribbon-bodies  
of horses in the fields  
at half-light. I'm not  
a part of it, not now – *the old feeling*  
was something I read once and I thought  
it meant nostalgia,  
but when I say it I mean  
this, the futility of wet gunpowder,  
the dark weight of it, the gravity slowing  
the spinning of spokes uphill, the gravity  
spinning the spokes downhill. Once at dusk  
the flooded ground was foil  
stuck through with toothpick-trunks  
of trees. I meant to tell you  
but I forgot it in looking  
for potholes, for the ruined prisms  
of glass in the street. I am looking  
too long at my watch on the road-shivered handlebars, waiting  
for the time and the trees  
to blur by, for the sun to set  
before I'm far enough to be lost.

## The Body as Ruined Animal

The sky            the body            move over rough bones of railroad tracks  
unending ribs in the torso of autumn  
a train moving forward slowly            beneath the red leaves poised  
          for collapse    the body does not leave the tracks  
          it turns to the engine wanting something  
                          the animal of it            does not know what  
                          it closes its eyes                    to the rush of light

## Elegy

Strike of living, strike of dying –  
the sting of both, unexpected –  
when it was you who somehow stirred  
what futility I saw  
and then I stirred it further,  
and its legs strengthened,  
and it walked on –  
this was life. Was miracle.  
When it vanished particulate,  
I made this a part of the story –  
to connect each point  
was to make line, or reason.  
However it turned, or plunged –  
part of the narrative  
I did not question,  
and when it stopped at a point  
in empty space  
I stared into its ending  
as if to make sense of it,  
and could not.











## The Body as Erasure

How it has come to feel a pain with the start  
of morning sun breaking  
like a white ocean around the trees  
the blades of birds' wings too sharp for waking      I stare at its face in the mirror  
its tired angles of mandible      that loathe to open for breath      or prayer

I am constantly speaking      to no one  
saying in a month in a week in a moment      half of it will leave me

in waking alongside the window      I feel the beginnings of light  
the contours      of the reluctant whole

## NOTES

1. “Theology of the Body” contains excerpts from the Catholic Catechism. These were sourced from  
  
Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2357-8. *Vatican.va*. The Holy See., n.d. Web.  
07 Mar 2015.
2. “Silver Strand” is a poem for my mother, and refers to the beach in Coronado, CA.
3. “Earth as Seizure” was inspired in part by Katie Ford’s poem “Last Breath Underneath” from her collection *Deposition* (Saint Paul: Graywolf, 2002).
4. The title of “Catholic Catechism, 2357” includes a reference number to a portion of the document that addresses the Church’s moral stance on homosexuality. It was sourced from  
  
Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2357. *Vatican.va*. The Holy See., n.d. Web. 07 Mar 2015.
5. Jim Whiteside is partially responsible for the inspiration behind “The Body as Dismembered Doll in Ivy.” This poem is for him.
6. “Confiteor” contains an excerpt from the Catholic Mass and allusions to and/or quotes from Revelation 1:16, 1:17 and Luke 24:49. These were sourced from  
  
"12 Bible Verses About Christ’s Hands." *Knowing-Jesus.com*. Knowing Jesus, n.d. Web.  
07 Mar. 2015.
7. “Chroma Kaleidoscope” is for Tom on the Greyhound.
8. “The Virgin Mary Survives the Storm” references the destruction by tornado of Archbishop Neale School in La Plate, MD on April 28, 2002.
9. “Soapstone” is for Emma Emory.
10. “The Virgin Mary Stands in a Moon on a Chain” references a Miraculous Medal given to me by my mother.
11. “Elegy for M.M.T., 1990-2000” is dedicated to the memory of Maggie May Tripp.

12. "Freya Roams the Nine Worlds" was informed in part by

"Freya." *Norse-mythology.org*. Norse Mythology for Smart People. n.d. Web. 27 Mar 2015.

13. "Two Trees" is for Coleen Childres.

14. "Elegy" is dedicated to the memory of Claudia Emerson.