

## Places I Have Left Myself

The first place I left myself, was, of course,  
my mother's womb, that heart-bond  
that never severs. My crib. There I left the version  
of myself that couldn't speak, couldn't walk.  
I left an abundance of myself strewn  
among the streets of Paris, in the Seine, in the dregs  
of every Kir Royal. Go to New York City.  
You will find me mixed with the grit and the gravel,  
the mad energy of a city that takes no prisoners.  
Take the A train from Washington Heights to  
14<sup>th</sup> Street and I'll whisper to you. I still haunt  
hospital beds, the cold, sterile winds  
of operating rooms, the walls of doctor's offices  
from North Carolina to California. I still swish  
and splay in the waters of the Atlantic. I sprinkle  
a speck of me wherever my heart skips a beat.

## **Things That Are Good For Children**

A slushie that makes the brain freeze  
on a random Tuesday. The possibility of  
the perfect swish through the hoop.  
Mornings that allow one to stretch  
into the day naturally, The universe of  
a school gym asking only that you try.  
Snot from crying, snot from laughing,  
Snot from being forgiven after you  
have misbehaved. Being submerged  
in a pool of love. And a warning: never  
doubt the universe is spun of pure magic.

## **To My Body After Three Transplants**

Frankenstein-ed darling,  
you wear your scars  
with absolute shamelessness.  
Each rough ripple  
is the story of a survival  
only you can tell.  
I hope you know  
how honored I am to be yours.

## **Diva, the Squirrel**

She came, I'm sure, for the peanuts, the walnuts  
I insisted on putting out on the deck in a glass bowl  
much to my mother's chagrin. She showed up, cuts  
covering her face and belly, with her simple goal

of survival. Her right ear had a small, triangular notch  
where ear had been. I wanted to ask her how a thing  
like that happened. For weeks I waited and watched  
her each morning, her little hands a delicate wellspring

of goodness working the nuts down to crumbs. I held  
half a walnut at arm's length, patiently coaxing her  
to take it from my fingers; My orbit of love swelled  
when – finally! – she took it! Slowly, I grazed her fur

with the back of my finger, running it down her spine.  
When she disappeared, my heart, I had to redesign.

## Someone In Austin, Texas Is Thinking Of You

*~after Alex Dimitrov*

This poem is not happening in Paris, France, like it should, but I'll have to settle for the dryness of a state in drought, the hot August rising from the concrete. At least if I was in Paris, I could be lost in Paris. Better to be lost, I think, where I can sit in the grass, gaze up at the Eiffel tower and eat crepes every day. I would ask for a *jambon et fromage*, offer the maker a *bon journée*, savor it while walking slowly in the Luxemburg Gardens. There would be dogs, and kids, and so much sex in the air you could smell it. But I'm not. I'm ordering tacos from a truck in 102-degree heat on a Tuesday. I imagine you the man sitting alone reading as I wait

who picks up a half-drunk cup of coffee  
with the other hand, floating it delicately  
to the lips. There is a pause. I pray to be the cup.