

Reading myself in the dark

Fingers circle around the aureole
and, as if I have not spent 47 years in this body,
I wonder if will I know it when I feel it?

Self-touching

required a purpose: to find ecstasy or the bud of death,
never simply to learn the intimate shape
of my windpipe, the undulations in the deepest pits
of my body. I asked doctors to explain
what I felt. They transliterated each bump,
rolled sensors over me, reported it's "mostly normal."

After a decade under my mother's tutelage
I knew exactly how the dough should feel:
cool and firm, no stickiness, easy to knead.

Yet no one ever taught me what mortality feels like
in my body. No one taught me to savor
the wondrous ordinariness of my being:

how the diaphragm contracts to welcome in
air, relaxes to let it go when all that is needed
is extracted; how it is brilliantly placed to massage
the thoracic duct, moving lymph, the purifier,
the bearer of light, through this body.

Maybe it is all that light that makes it painful

to look in the mirror. I want to memorize
each fold of belly that holds my ovaries and to love
my knees equally, imperfect match that they are.
I want the maps of varicose rivers to be my landmarks,
and, in the morning, I want my hand, fully awake,
to recognize I am me by the curve of my breast.