



Anastomosis

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The Head Block

ELIZABETH BEAM

11

In anatomy lab today we are faced
With the aftermath of a revolution.
The French, in one sense. Heads
Of cadavers severed and displaced

From bodies onto wooden blocks.
The usual coup of medical school.
Now we learn the cranial nerves,
And meanwhile set aside the box

Of ideas about the mind inside
The brain encased in skull behind
Her eyes, thankfully still cloaked
By a cap of cheesecloth limply tied.

They cut off her head but not mine,
And mine is experiencing the physics
Of a feeling about dying. It is gravity
Circling into the reality of this resign

From humankind to organic matter.
She is gone despite the formaldehyde
Fixing her husk like a bug in amber.
To the students buzzing with chatter

She is a history of memories we
Will never remember. This is messy.
The mind-body dichotomy is false-
Ish. Give me a moment to notice

Her lips are chapped. Do you think
That her husband kept her lipsticks?
Did she have a husband? A daughter
She offered her shades of pink?

My questions swell to fill the sac
We zip her into at the end of class.
It is customary to let them dissipate
Instead of ask, but I turn back

Or rather, I am pulled by a new force.
If it is rebellion to grieve, I will revolt.
The tragedy would be twice if I ceded
My core in the course of this course.

The psychiatrist’s exam is a conversation,
A serious consideration of *How do you do?*
Up to the last two questions: *Have you thought*
About suicide? Do you hear voices in your head?
Yes peals clear as a bell. Here is a situation.
No is information in the breath it is delivered.
A scoff has never known madness. A sigh
Has swept against its underbelly, gently.

Dry mouth? Drowsiness? Diarrhea?
No, no, no, she replies, but I see her tilting
Into gusts of mourning. Her mother died.
What about dizziness? She nods, *That’s it.*
My whole world is spinning these days.
A pill will not reverse her loss. At least
It fortifies rafters, caulks cracks
As a twister churns the heart.



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