

To a Surgeon · *Sydney Lea*

Nights, the stars
like polyps arrange
themselves in a body
I envision as world.
Or I say they hang
like clustered fates
waiting to fall
on the body, curses,
high pains that at last
will make us strange.

Your vision's straight
as razors, earned
each day gowned green,
your eye is schooled
and hands have learned
excision of trope.
Still in the theatre,
I only seem
to unmask myself.
I borrow my terms

as I stretch this world
before you, body
and lumpish brain
and untrue dream
so often lashed
together by bloody
threads of figure
like wildflowers stitched
in the stammering throat
of a brook, or muddy

lichens gathered
on the oaks' gnarled chests.
My children, exotic
and restless as cancer,
natter for breakfast.
Through frost-laced panes
I watch two hills
sag off the sun
and lust to be on them,
for the mind says *breasts*

though it knows that weather
has capped them with ice,
so slightly does world
conform to desire.
If hills are breasts,
how will we hide there
the winter-sick rabbits
thick as ward patients,
waiting for death?

How account for the way
last autumn the flames
cauterized acres?
. . . The moon struggles up,
and the heart, that lame
redded hare, and woman
bloods to the moon.
The hills become beauty,
like health. A kestrel
rides the first beam

like the first pure thought
of the one who survived,
or a child who's swum
through amnios rank
as a new spring tide.
The metaphors clot
my conning of world's
immense operation,
and I'd lay myself open
for one hour, clarified,

malign or benign.
Sure eye, sure hand.
You shrug off my envy,
old sawbones plumbing
goiter and wen,
but you bend to the body
and worlds—moon, rabbit,
child, sun,
hawk, father,
high stars—attend.