

WARREN SLESINGER

The Evening Light

The horizon holds no lofty notion,
no mansion in the moving clouds,
no gate that opens for her to float

on her bosom through the air
for she does not live there and then
in her naked skin, but here and now

when she steps out of the shower,
warm and wet, I kiss her slender neck,
and smell the perfume from the soap

in the hollow of her collarbone;
the tile gleams, the air swirls around her,
and the mirror fogs with steam.

Wholly mortal is my wife
who does not foresee an afterlife
and who is not indifferent to her own demise,

and yet, she does not flinch
when I touch a bone instead of breast
underneath the skin graft on her chest

as smooth and plain as parchment
and larger than my hand
that could not protect her from the knife.

But she is not embarrassed
by her nakedness, and presses against me
her other breast while she leans

to wipe away the steam,
and when I turn, our eyes meet in the mirror,
and I do not relish the reflection

in that instant
of misgiving in which she waits
and wants to go on living.

Others see a brightness in the sky
and find a higher purpose
in the evening light, but she does not.

Her eyes merely redden with regret
at the thought of time passing,
and yet, she seldom cries

as though she chose
the uncertainty of life
as opposed to the uncertainty of heaven.