

## POEM

## The remaining questions

you may ask about  
 deformed structure: a white root onion bulb behind eyes, or  
 boggy green-grape bulging under knuckles, or the green  
 sprouts shooting from the carina, or the bifurcation  
 of open-lung  
 shaped as a bird's breastbone: sensual, white, snowy, open paths:  
 the things that remind us of the first cut in surgery, or me of  
 his legs apart in the evening;  
 you may ask about the paper-mache of our environment  
 mapped on the undressed body: a raspberry rash  
 or the leaky shimmer of virus-vesicles  
 nailed newly, painfully, on her back as  
 new shingles for the roof of her chest; or the  
*coracoid*: the raven's beak  
 and the writing desk of shoulder tissue where it perches, or  
 the way the *sella turcica* sits precariously  
 atop the equine mind; the *lumate*: that deep, slow, concave  
 dimple-bone poised in the hands of  
 our root-skinned darlings as they bath us and  
 promise us poetry;  
 you may ask about the diffuse, metabolic whirring,  
 the humming invisible that makes chefs weep as they chop:  
 the electric ions in motion in blood:  
 a tick in potassium, a splash of acid, a white cell—

but

some questions are the stationary swept aside  
 on office desks to make room  
 for hurried lovers: whether he loved him and whether  
 the rectal tumour makes it painful  
 to love him still;  
 or whether she, in older age, ever wants to take a man  
 with her teeth and whether she feels she can,  
 if she wanted to: but we must not ask  
 about the unsnarled body's desires  
 so acutely preserved, laid with shy hands on the breakfast table,  
 for daily swallowing, for tucking in;  
 or whether my stethoscope  
 feels like a man's metal-cold, unwanted hands  
 beneath her breast; or if the barring of  
 his fresh, lit, sparky cigarettes in hospitals  
 was, all along, behind  
 his refusal to stay.

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