

The Things I'm Not

After Chessy Normile

A therapist once told me that I should
sit with my discomfort until
it tells me its name.

I didn't show up for the next meeting
after she said that.

I guess I don't really know how to be transgender.
But my abacus beads are all slotted to *male*,
pushed up tight against the far left frame.

And I thought I'd learn everything from my rabbi.
Don't we want to learn everything from a
man cloaked in white?
Earth's version of an angel?

But when He lifts the Torah,
for God and the back pews to see,
I feel I know nothing.

The blue-suited man beside me
says *the service isn't as good as last year.*
He still sings louder than the cantor,
and I try not to shush him.

Who am I to disrupt his worship?

A straight-edged piece in a circular puzzle,
pressed up against a congregation of
abacus beads that are pushed in the
right direction.

God, I hated that therapist and her stupid beads.

She talked too slow,
too calm.
I just wanted her to tell me what to say
when someone asks me my name.

Confession

After Donika Kelly

It begins as all confessions do: in the kitchen \ through the haze
of the honey-colored whiskey \ we started drinking when you turned up
mourning the loss of your \ hips \ thighs \ breasts \ collarbone \ and
anywhere else \ he touched \ *and you still \ wear his shirt* \ it means
right now he's shirtless \ *I meant it metaphorically* \ and you shout at me
to do more than just apologize \ for what he has done \ and \ you tell me
you know \ that I was taken the same way \ and \ you seize my hands \ and
you beg for counsel \ and \ what contribution of mine \ could possibly return
what he has taken \ what \ what \ what could I say that you don't already know?

New Chest

After Franny Choi

Dismantled meat shaped like my father.
Hospital gift-wrapped,
Christmas-like packaging of
tissue in sutures. A hidden double incision

spouting fleshy defamation. Careful
not to let those curved pectoral borders
confess to the carving.
Only drone gentle in gentle company – never boast

or snap back on the street or complain
lest we both be swept up in the current of
“one of those.” Or worse, forgotten,

talked over a wolf’s stance on lapdogs.
Or worse, feminized a cruel snub. Or—
there are worse things.