

A Body That Expands

---For Lora Lee

Holly Welker

My sister sings Puccini in the shower.
A fever ripped the muscle of her heart
when she was five but now she is almost
twenty-one and lovely. She leaves music
open like an invitation at the
piano in her bedroom; she can't manage
money and loves to examine the map
of the world hanging on my bedroom wall.
She studies music: she sings soprano.
She told me, "I play the saxophone,
but my main instrument is my body."
Perhaps you already knew that. I had thought
only of vocal cords, not a whole body
that expands with air and vibrates.
The first time you heard someone produce
a series of expansive, varied tones
travelling effortlessly around you,
did it seem like a miracle or just
the only sensible way for ears, throat,
and lungs to work together? Pardon me
if I seem bewildered. My sister loves
microwave egg rolls and owns fifty pair
of shoes. She is lovely but silly though
she doesn't look frail; she doesn't know
that I leave my room in the apartment
we share to listen to her practicing,
singing Puccini in the shower because
steam makes the arias easier.
The rhythm of her heart is thump whoosh whoosh;
her blood is never sure where it is going.