

## My Body in the Temple

*Darlene Young*

Halfway through the session, I become aware  
of a full bladder and nothing else.  
All that is holy is eclipsed  
by flesh. I pant in claustrophobia  
between the lady who snores  
and the gum-chomper, suddenly surrounded  
by bodies. I remember how,  
during my last pregnancy, the gurgle of stomachs,  
the smell of the chicken-à-la-king breath around me,  
the man clearing his nose into his throat,  
sickened me to such devilish and frantic irritation  
I had to go on temple hiatus.  
Sometimes the body is too heavy.

Like now—my bladder, an overripe melon,  
makes it hard to stand and suck in to allow  
the matron to pass me in the aisle.  
Counting minutes, counting stages  
in the ceremony, I pray an apology  
to the woman whose name is folded  
in my pocket. An ordinance requires a body,  
I tell her. This is what you get.

When it's over—when I've changed clothes  
with sloppy rush and found the bathroom,  
I emerge so much lighter that this place  
feels suddenly airy and bright. I love  
this liminal circus, this foyer of glory  
smelling of polyester, so earnest,

so strange. On my way out,  
I take my time, stepping tenderly around  
a bright spirit in an awkward old body  
kneeling to tie her sister's shoes.

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