What startles first is that it’s there.

After long hours in the car
when thought seemed
seamless with forward
motion, & the body,
a home you left that morning—

& now it’s naked & unyielding,
a narrative,
if you’ll have it

that the scars know more
about your past

than you choose to remember—

the exact angle & slip
of a blade

in your cheek you’ve spent
months trying to douse

in the gasoline

of a better story.

& the stretch marks
rivuleting your breasts, the body’s
overreactive white-washing, the blot

where your areola was once pink. It takes

imagination to say that what’s there
in the mirror

is what’s you—

which is why most creatures don’t feel guilt.

& if they have

memories, the form wriggling in that claw-trap

is another member of the flock,

witnessed. & the doves they released

over your brother’s grave wear symbolism like buckshot

in the breast,

unknowingly.

Such dirty things meaning purity.

All those you’ve called you.