

John McCarthy

Definitions of Body

Body 1. “Of Work”: My mother did not—collected disability in the mail. The body is a paycheck inside an envelope held up to the light. 2. “Of Water”: My mother was a river. Carried me into a gulf. When I was thirteen I dove into the trashcan to find the sunken orange bottles that resurfaced among eggshells and coffee grounds. She pulled herself under her own current. 3. “Of Bones”: Her skull was a bag of voices. When she breathed, her ribcage moved like fingertips tapping together. Her teeth turned yellow, then white, then ghosts. She swallowed her ghosts, until she filled up with too many. 4. “Of Christ”: Has risen. Revived at the hospital. The blood put back into her body with blood. The way I stood in the dark room and touched the IV hole to make sure she was real. 5. “Of Lies”: Erased. She is not real. She has the intention to be a wraith. When she wakes and I ask how she is, my mother looks past me. 6. “Of Proof”: The note I found which read, *I’m just so tired. I love you all tender. Goodnight.*