

## Neck

I will go again to Lancaster Manor,  
 walk its wards, and lay myself down  
 in a cradle-bed, between parallel  
 rails, and wait for a girl like the girl I was,  
 impatient and unlearned in caring,  
 to loop her arms under my shoulders  
 and swing me to sit dizzy-spinning

against a mattress edge, my palsied hand  
 trembling for hers, though she will not notice.  
 Then, drawing breath and squeezing  
 her muscles taut, she will draw my body up

and drop it into a waiting chair. But I  
 will know to hold her neck and bear  
 it down, my weight pulling on that slender  
 column and riding it earthward, though she struggles  
 to turn away. Her face twists. "Let go," she says.  
 "Let go of me." She tries to wrench my arms away,  
 but I cling to that callow strength, hold  
 tightly to its soft meat.

How vast am I?

My shadow can't fill a county bed.

How permanent am I?

My sheets are removed with the twist of a wrist.

How heavy am I?

At last! Some consequence: I am borne,  
 I am held and shuttled. I burden  
 this world even with dull gums, even

with my slow, willful enduring.

How small am I?

Her neck answers,  
the pedestal neck, the mast neck, the bell-towered neck,  
its fleshy rope a spring birch.

I will swing from its bough into the day,  
into a chair of chrome and vinyl  
and rubberized steel, beneath a cheerful lap robe.

I will swing from her neck into the briefest flight, not  
dropped, though she warns, “Never do that again.  
Never hold on when I’m trying to lift you.”