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## [My Tattoo]

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## ERIN M. BERTRAM

### *[My Tattoo]*

Something worth naming as yet without a name.  
What's to be said for a bird paused in eternal alight  
on forearm, wings spread both feral & in embrace?

My paramour. Event horizon. The flesh the first  
& quietest defense. Which is not to say insignificant  
or any less than other, more hardy variants of armor,

whose weight is implied or otherwise & otherly  
borne. Lines sketched, drawn, traced, then memorized,  
fingered nights, mornings wildly admired. Once

embossed, the flesh rises in either protest or accord;  
what else is to be expected, what response better suited  
to dignify such intrusion. Forearm gone all Byzantine

relief, firebird affixed, you rise, a tiny Christ, held  
there by layers thin as paper sheaves. Creature born,  
creature risen, creature risen again. That Sunday,

under the whirring buzz of mechanized & flourishing  
ink, my body held there, willingly, for minutes  
at a time. Bird of pyre, bird of soot, bird of cigarette

gone rococo, gone smolder, fixed intaglio, most intimate  
intarsia. Wingspan flared feral, silent suspension  
between alight & arrival, always impending, always

already there. And its plumage, tenacious, tender  
feathers of the neck exposed, an exposé on what it is  
to be humble & brazen, &, yes, deservedly holy. Forever

turning in on itself, turning over & over, a face turned  
away & quickly back again. As when thick stone wears  
the abrasions given it by wind or the beloved palm,

a vestigial translation of its former self. That requisite  
turning, effectual in its want, until final swift —  
inevitable? — release, sole blue beacon of an eye

amid a whirl of otherwise dynamic, unchanging heat.