[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.