

Radiation Tattoos

The first a symbol of math,
approximation. Equivocation.
Small, dark, the space between
two parts, neither being equal.
Both sides the almost of truth.
I wanted uncertainty to mark me.
Little pain, the taint of ink on
the left side of my back.

The second mostly memory.
Waking, I tasted chalk on the bow,
its residue on strings. Heard the low
murmur, a cello. Base clef. No image,
just thought. I needed more.
Next to the math sign, it is curly,
curved lines. Neither seem mine.
Dream marks.

The last are dots. Four Horsemen.
New constellation. One on each side
below the armpits. One between each
breast. One below. Charcoal seeds
that cannot sprout. Compass for
machines with rotating metal arms.
Anchor for red blinking graphs
along the breast, the armpit.

On a slab, naked from the waist up,
I am scars, hair, sweat. Four technicians.
Daily doses. Ten minutes. Six weeks.
A world of invisible, burning light.
I forget these mounds of tissue and fat
are part of living. Soft like rice paper,
delicate, warm. Mine. Mine for my own
making, my own wanting. I forget
I am not meat.