

THE SPOON RIVER Poetry Review

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In Praise of the Body Broken in Two

I woke this way—bent
at the waist, vibrating,
a silver chime struck
with a hammer.
For three days I have cradled
my body in my arms,
have carried it swaddled
from room to room, pain
tolling like a temple bell.
How could I not love any warm thing
breathing against my chest?
How not love what's helpless—
a wounded animal you feed
with a spoon?
Usually the body prefers
to drag itself from room to room
and declines my offer
of help. Pain, in the end,
is personal. Sometimes, though,
I'll lean against my shoulder,
and side by side I'll make my way
from bed to toilet to couch.
It is no longer in me
to wish to leave the body, be spirit
soaring above self.
The body is not a wrapper
to be discarded.
Count me among those
locked out and gazing

at the architecture of skin
and bones—the arches and rose
windows, buttresses, crockets, cusps.
This place is so holy
you'd have to leave your shoes
to step inside.