The ultrasound

POETRY

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Ultrasound

Grainy television footage
   from outer space.
And then we see you, tiny astronaut,
   in thrall to your human hands.
Your ribs cast a tent of
   light, dramatic and impossible.
Your normal morphology is
   pointed out to us, organ
by organ: your bifurcated brain,
   the chambers of your heart,
your spine, your face — surprisingly
   familiar and haunting.
The radiologist gives you back
   to darkness and to patience.
In the lobby, we pay the bill
   for this experience. Part
silent movie, part surveillance.

Putting the baby to sleep

In this time of no-time
   (colours slipping into dawn),
this search for the ghost
   of being is a concentration
of bodies, a ritual of
gesture and sound
   (murmuring and washing
machines). It is a watching
of clocks and their
slow workings of minutes,
followed by the
awkward gymnastics of
placing the sleeper into a cot,
and the laying on of hands
when eyes flick open
(like a minor tragedy).
Returning to the darkness
of bed, your body is
as taut as a horse.