

BY MINA KWOCZYNSKA

i am not who i was

beneath sickly fluorescent lights, i lay—
once-glossy hair now dull,
face gaunt, drained of colour,
all skin, no bone,
a plated fish—
when did i last see the sun?

they say the body is a temple
but my body has never been *my* temple—
incessant poking, prodding,
fragments of me pickled and preserved for analysis.
nurses, physicians — hands unearthing,
do they find gems or blood beneath my skin?

before i am consumed, i glance through the glass—
my mother's worry, palpable,
her salty tears weigh heavy on my tongue.
i watch as she walks away,
a rag clenched between her fingers, unused —
will she suffer when i am gone?

in silence, i am wheeled to the theatre,
its cold embrace unwelcome,
as masked people parrot one another,
sterile, devoid of warmth.
scalpels in hand, waiting, willing—
how will it feel when they carve my flesh?

as i surrender to the fog,
my mind drifts into darkness—
the last image i see: the flush skin of my lover,
my refuge,
my north star—
can you guide me home?

