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Stillborn

Lori Levy

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Stillborn

by Lori Levy

I gave birth last week to my latest
poem. Squeezed out what had swelled in me and
there it was
naked on the page. I bent close
as if to count its toes: twenty-five lines,
skeleton intact,
shape normal.
But it didn't kick
or suck or blink or even
yawn. A perfect frame, yet nothing breathed.
I turned it upside down to make it
scream. Twisted, poked, tugged its limbs. Re-
arranged it on its bed. Pounded on
its chest, but could not pump a pulse
into my poem.

I buried it and prayed
another one would come. Soon.
That it would belch a lusty cry,
demand my breast, my arms.
That it would bawl out all it knows
of hunger, pain, desire.

