heart
on a
tripod

Kaia Sand
heart
on a
tripod

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Gratitude to Susana Gardner, editor of Dusie, for her leadership, vision, and day-to-day panache. Gratitude to all the participants of the Dusie Kollektiv. Gratitude to my family. Gratitude to Jules Boykoff, Meg Eberle Ainsworth, and Michael Glaser for feedback on this poem. Some public heckling also provided useful feedback. Gratitude to CE Putnam for using a piece of this poem on a postcard for the Subtext Reading Series. Gratitude to Sam Ladkin and Sara Crangle for providing me the first opportunity to read a draft of this poem at the Cambridge Poetry Summit. The title of the Summit anthology, *further evidence of nerves*, and a wood carving duplicated on the cover, proved generative for this poem.

for Jules

June 2006

Portland, Oregon

*A Dusie Kollektiv Chapbook*
cagey lungs, I forgot about you

until my photographic heart snapped

with a shutter your negative

exposed breath, not a stutter

but three notes, a glance in, &

breath held like a tarn

in a fell, & breath out

a hem on fire, a dark skirt

raising red, fire rising

on the threads, every vein

trafficking blood, arteries

export for the heart that shoots

the slabby liver in successive

stills, moving in, moving toxic

& out & impossibly so—
the runner prints her track
by looping track, pink glistening

tissue tolerant to her

demands, robustly cellular

her glorious photogenic heart

a starlet before a strobe

beyond Olympian festivals

simply endless training
& the blood will come

as it always does. sickness

in organs is their alternative

behavior. a clutter of blood

a nerve made timid by a pin

a cellular heap of a windbag lung

vertebrae furious like a cactus

I shall grow old
blood warms my hand that writes
above my pulse covered
in skin, a pulse taps
sixty as the runner touches
her wrists fits the body she chose
but her body is Olympian & not
alone when heart muscles heave
side-by-side, when all the legs move
in stride, another runner
& her legs become her legs
become a heap of bodies &
hopeless. bodies hit bodies
& they fall that way
a slice of a heart might reveal me

inside the custard of fat that is

human, though hooves don’t speak

for the cross-sectioned deer—

yellow & pancreatic & possible

these are my organs & I

have never seen them. though

I did see a woman’s heart beneath

her sternum, I lifted her

small clavicle, her fingernails painted

pink & dead. no organ

where it should be, so singular was she

if I could smell my heart:
these are my organs & I like them

they do travel well but are imprecise

& my body grows to fill

a field that awaits it
the runner touches her breast
divide sun & moon
at the intimacy. no one touches
noon. ‘when lipstick wore terror’
as it always does, our seductive
clothing. the communiqué of this skirt
is not that—I know the man in the film
who wore dresses to the grange
his desire to be a woman
& thus glamorous in that way
lipstick nicking a neck like a heart
a dark skirt burns up
my big-booted gait prints script
in the mud. hazy hailstone, lazy eye
the glint of glamour:
swaddled in seduction, wear
a communiqué, walk it. the blood
will come, as it always does—
lavishly. these flames form my frame
form the runner, as she trains
again, no longer hopeful
with Olympics, just a body
patient with itself, its daily strides
nerves made brave by a pin, toes

of straw, a gumshoe heart

a stinted stent in feeble flesh

this arm, the branch the artist claimed

as a cathedral, still, impossibly

so, every living thing, impossibly so—

these flames form my frame
Notes

Image of a runner is a likeness of Mary Decker Slaney, middle-distance runner extraordinaire.

‘when lipstick wore terror’ is from a likely misremembered headline I read in the Washington Post several years ago.
Cover art: Gifts from the Earth
by Jessica Berg Swanson