

Weighing In

By Rhina P. Espailat

What the scale tells you is how much the earth
has missed you, body, how it wants you back
again after you leave it to go forth

into the light. Do you remember how
earth hardly noticed you then? Others would rock
you in their arms, warm in the flow

that fed you, coaxed you upright. Then earth began
to claim you with spots and fevers, began to lick
at you with a bruised knee, a bloody shin,

and finally to stoke you, body, drumming
intimate coded messages through music
you danced to unawares, there in your dreaming

and your poems and your obedient blood.
Body, how useful you became, how lucky,
heavy with news and breakage, rich, and sad,

sometimes, imagining that greedy zero
you must have been, that promising empty sack
of possibilities, never-to-come tomorrow.

But look at you now, body, soft old shoe
that love wears when it's stirring, look down, look
how earth wants what you weigh, needs what you know.

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Rhina P. Espailat was born in the Dominican Republic under the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. After Espailat's father opposed the regime, her family was exiled to the United States, where they settled in New York City. She began writing poetry as a young girl, first in Spanish, then English, and has published in both languages.

