

Susan Steger Welsh

IN WHICH THE SOUL REFUSES TO DISCLOSE ITS LOCATION

When X-ray machines were first invented, religious leaders tried to use them to find the soul.

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Leonardo da Vinci,
with a wax model of an ox brain,
making an X just behind the forehead;
Pascal, with theories
about the weight of air and the existence
of a vacuum -- assigning me the pineal gland,
keeper of the body's clock and calendar;
The doctor probing the tissue
that touches all four chambers of the heart:

You track me --
employ tweezer and telescope,
hound dog and perfume.

I take it you've forgotten everything.

Can you pinpoint
the shine in foil? The chime in bell?

You weary me, all of you --

Do you think I chose this animal lodging,
with its cracking plaster and fire drills?

Look for me instead in photographs
taken without asking. I am the bird,
beating against rib,
slipping out -- through mouth,
nostril, dream.
Electric, neon blue,
I crouch behind the heart --

There are things I keep from you
for your own good:

The mornings I follow near-grown children
out the door, supply the same

vague stories upon return.

The dusks I sometimes
wander off to turn stones in the garden,
climb the maple tree
to argue with crows.