

THE LAW OF CONSERVATION

The same amount of matter exists
before and after it is changed,
the chemistry teacher explains.

If matter cannot be destroyed
the eyelash fluttering from your
butterfly kiss can become a tear

can shutter itself in a nautilus
and be the "I love you" voice
in a conch echoing the whole ocean

can enclose the entire quantum
roulette of our days, a View Master
of nandina bushes fringing our
shotgun shack in Montgomery,

a pitcher of sweet tea on hothouse
porches, me always thinking that
noticing changes in matter should be
the adjunct of natural breath, you sure

we'd have no need of poems if
this were true. I go to sleep one night
under the whole gleaming mass of stars
and rise a constellation of liver spots

my heart still beating like a Ramma
Jamma Yella Hamma, my ear pressed
to the conch, beating honey I am
I am I am

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