

I'm Preparing My Body for Your Birth

the way the *Hevra Kadisha* prepares
the dead for burial. I cut
my nails: thumb pinky middle-
finger pointer ring-
finger. I squeeze

my wedding band off that swollen
stump. I anoint my massive
belly with lilac oil and watch the ghost
of your fist move across me
a purple current

in that vast ocean I contain. Do the dead flutter
so, too? I squat
to stretch my pelvis, as narrow
as the ancient gates
of the Old City

of Jerusalem, cool and wet, pilgrims
and peddlers coming going
squeezing past
each other and the unseen
spirits,

whose bodies, scrubbed and wrapped
in white as mine is now, the towel barely
stretching round,
are lowered down
as they rise up--up--

I'm preparing my body to bear
down so you may rise, your
cry as wild and haunting
as a Shofar's
so that the walls
that separate you from me
the living from the dead
the holy from the profane
come crashing
crashing down.