

“Conservation of Energy”

My professor says energy is never lost,
only transferred
which means every laugh I swallowed
is still somewhere,
vibrating.

It lives in the hum of fluorescent lights,
in the tremble of bridges at night,
in the quiet friction of people
pretending not to need anything.

If this is true,
then the girl I used to be
has not disappeared,
she has diffused.

She is in the kinetic blur
of cars leaving campus in May,
in the potential energy
of unopened emails,
in the heat that rises
from asphalt after rain.

She is in my chest, too;
not as something whole,
but as something conserved:

a system of almos,ts,
of nearlys,
of things that could have been said
but weren't.

And maybe that's what growing is:
not becoming new,
but redistributing
what you already were
into forms that can survive you.