

## **Anarcha Appears Again and Again**

*after Rachel Eliza Griffiths*

Once I was slave, then I was an Alabama woman,  
a hushed experiment hidden between the damp thighs

of Tuskegee men. Too many times I was a newborn  
next to my mother in LA General County Hospital,

her slick syllables said something in Spanish, something  
in English, something about sterility, something about tubes.

I am plump and soft and have not always had this hair—  
always damaged. Always ruined, sent away to be fixed

and corrected. I am America's opaque shadow, tossed  
like a dog rotting on every country roadside.

I've been HeLa cells passed around like Halloween candy.  
Are the doctors still waiting

for their black offering? Me, a silk dress of skin?  
Consider this:

each moment I am perched on an examination table  
is my break, diseased heart, taken child.

This is how I feel: wide. Dark. Lumpy. Cotton  
at the bottom of a pillowcase. My cartilage

has been trustworthy in its role,  
how it performs its designed duty,

how it keeps fastened my flesh  
to my bone. If I could be more

than a specimen, more than a collection  
of daffodils, *flora* would mean I was not here.

Don't you see? I am still here on all fours.  
I was never bone, nor beast, nor symbol for suffering.

I am a compass for warnings, a cured tissue.  
They are still dressing me for the cut

and I prep for the familiar  
cold gauze turned warm, then wet, then red.