
POETRY | SPRING 2018

Dorothy's Hands

By Pamela Hart

After a series of photographs at the Yale Cushing Whitney Medical Brain Library

In the earliest photograph from 1919
she's pictured in a hospital bed.
You see her shaved head
the arms
especially her hands
held up toward the sky.

How her brain
works or not
isn't visible.
But her fingers
look like long keys
of the piano she loves to play.

Dorothy's hair by 1922
though short has grown back.
There's a scar on the left
side of her skull.
Her eyes haunt
the neurologist
and his camera
like dust-bowl women.
But Dorothy's portrait is science
not news or art.

In 1924 Dorothy's hair
cut and curled
in a fashionable bob
perhaps a wig
hides the ruin
of her scalp.
The lift of her mouth
diminished by tumors
that return and return.

The last photograph
has no date hardly looks

like Dorothy
her music gone
to another meningioma.

And her hands
palms out with fingers curling
the way a child says
monster or wolf.

Pamela Hart is a writer in residence at the Katonah Museum of Art where she manages a visual literacy arts in education program. Her book, *Mothers Over Nangarhar*, on the experience of military families after multiple years at war, will be published by Sarabande Books in 2019. Pamela was awarded a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2013. Her chapbook, *The End of the Body*, was published by Toadlily Press and her poetry has appeared in various online and print journals. She serves as poetry editor and mentor for the Afghan Women's Writing Project.

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