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The only time I ever cried at the gym,

Paula Brancato

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The only time I ever cried at the gym,

Abstract

2015 Booth Poetry prize winner, as selected by Ellen Bryant Voigt.

Cover Page Footnote

"The only time I ever cried at the gym," was originally published at *Booth*.



May 29, 2015

The only time I ever cried at the gym,

by Paula Brancato

2015 Booth Poetry prize winner, as selected by Ellen Bryant Voigt

apart from when I broke a balance beam with my
head, was in yoga class. The teacher

in her bow pose, switched on “Love
to love you, baby.” Right into the second

chakra it went, just above my pubic bone, when something
very much like my head, but lower, burst.

Only a month before, I had lost a baby I wanted
and a man I didn’t, one after the other.

In my bow pose, holding my ankles,
pelvis rocking on the mat, I started to cry.

I had no idea my body had baby memory.
A current ran through me, very like when my head

unexpectedly hit the beam and I found I was still
alive, or when years later, I held my mother as my grandmother

died, feeling through her body, my grandmother's life in me.
In the yoga class, what I felt was distinctly the other
way around, a life that almost was but now would never be.
A part of me had died, and a smaller part of my mother
and an even smaller part of my mother's mother and so on.

Paula Brancato is a Sicilian-American writer and one of the first women executives on Wall Street. Her work as a filmmaker, music producer and financial consultant have all contributed to her unique voice. Paula's poems have appeared in *Mudfish*, *Bomb Magazine*, *Georgetown Review*, *Litchfield Review*, *Southern California Anthology*, *Ambit Magazine*, and *Georgia Review*. A Harvard MBA and graduate of LA Film School and Hunter College, Paula also serves as faculty at USC and SUNY Southampton.