

Kimberly Ann

Theodicy

In the photograph, I am four-years-old wearing my father's navy cap, posing atop a mattress: cobalt and white striped coverlet to match my white t-shirt, cobalt pants.

I look every bit Popeye—blond pigtails, fists at my waist. My father bends his arms—gangly as mine—to hold the camera, take the photograph.

I wonder now if this is the bed,
if this is the coverlet on which my legs were spread the width of a hand,
on which the optical system of my eyes collected

dimly lit contours of a man's face—
the every-other-Sunday gaze of a pedophile, third seat, first row, next to
the pastor's wife, silent, smiling

like the broken swag of moon draped across
my bedroom floor, passage to the closet, burrow, bed,
one finger-width crack between closet doors, my vagina safely gathered in

a hand, waiting to leave this space the morning after
when mother finds underwear crumpled beneath a chest of drawers
and me in the closet remembering nothing.

Thirty years later, I remember something:
this space, sheets bunched and threaded through our limbs, my
 husband's
silent-smiling face,

a door safely gathered in his hand,
one finger width crack of vagina—burrow, bed, third seat, first row of
the moon, me

collecting the eyes of my father when he says
he knew he had left me with a pedophile—
the contours of my marriage spread the full width of a photograph.

Kimberly Ann received her MA from Central Michigan University and is pursuing an MFA. She teaches undergraduate courses for Alma College and her poetry has appeared in *Ruminate*, *Temenos*, *Central Review*, and *Mothers Always Write*, and is forthcoming in *See Spot Run* and *Mocking Heart Review*.