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How Now?

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Author Bio

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How Now?

LAUREN P. HAND

I heard once that cows have four hearts.
How now? I can't recall, but I so hope that this is true,
that cows, blinking with eyelashes
Maybelline lovely
have four beating hearts
beneath the surface of their splotchy skin;
four big red hearts, wrapped up
in black and white,
like roses rolled into yesterday's paper.

For my part,
I wish I had even half as many;
two would be nice,
and three would be plenty.
With four hearts,
I'd hand them out for free:
*one heart for my mother,
and one heart for me,
and one heart for coffee,
and one heart for tea.*

With four hearts, think how quickly
I could start over:
*one heart still healing,
one heart filled with grief,
one heart first breathing a sigh of relief,
one heart I'd give you like the first autumn leaf.*

I heard today that cows do not have four hearts.
They have one huge heart,
with four distinct chambers.
I heard today that so do I,
and that the difference
between mine and the bovine
lies primarily in size:

*four chambers, like rooms you could live in,
four vessels, like ships out at sea.*

I'm going to start living like I have four hearts:
*one heart for my mother,
and heart one for me,
and one for the stories that go best with tea,
and one for you, if you'd like it to be,*

like the first leaf of Autumn that fell
from its tree,
my heart,
red maple,
whole, in
part.