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The Joy of Sex

*i like my body when it is with your
body. It is so quite new a thing.*

—e.e. cummings

Killing time before a party, I open
my friend's copy of *The Joy of Sex*

while she showers and find an e.e.
cummings poem that my ex used

to get me into bed. Despite fights
and his wholesome northern accent

those words made me flush, like they
were unbuttoning my shirt. Maybe

it's the scent of my friend's tea
rose shower gel, but now it all

seems too sweet, artificial as latex.
Chalk it up to bitterness (it's been

a while) but thumbing through
the sketched characters with their

unlimited flexibility, their ability
to live upside-down without risk

of oxygen deficiency, the expert
instructions of how to rub what

and where that read like a car
owner's manual make me

wonder how I ever fell in love
with a poem especially when

Amanda's husband stares at Fox
News for hours every night instead

of watching her body unfold
like an arched wave nearing the shore

and gym-obsessed Eileen has
forgotten what the body is for

and I haven't been really kissed
by a man in years, making me feel

very young and very old all at once like
the first time at anything always does.

Carrie Conners

Carrie Conners is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she is writing her dissertation, *Pointing Back and Laughing at Uncle Sam: Humor and Form in Recent American Political Poetry*. Her poetry has been featured in *California Quarterly* and will appear in *Tar Wolf Review*.