

do i look pretty like this?

Bella Schilling

my canary incisors rotting from smoke
and my auburn strands thinning,
an identity befitting the altering chameleon
like a putrid corpse on her ninth life.

through my first life,
senses untarnished
and illusory potentials.
her forgiving body
thrown on the floor,
a vernacular of passionate sensitivity.

my second,
the seclusion set.
lost in the ether,
a threatening exile
fixed
like the lip of the raw bruise on my left knee.

third,
the polite virago.
placid on the exterior
a benevolent grin
white knuckles clutching at their heavy heartstrings.

fourth,
my crimson grin flattered the broken woman,
a fantasy touched by the slivers of my full bust
and cigarette stains from each voyeur.
eternally bound in his tenure,
is this version more beautiful than the last?

fifth,

Bella Schilling

and sixth,
and seventh round,
i suited my mother—
doomed from the start
and agony possessing my hips,
three insurmountable marriages fastened around my
ring finger
now a desolate snow.

drenched in self-reproach,
a delicate requiem served my eighth life;
molding to the bathtub tile until the water drains
and trusting i somehow slip down too.

how strenuous
to be a woman born with pain built in,
gradually charring her insides
from anticipated calamity.
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