My mother married Chapman and continued her treatment, but it was too late for the two of us as mother and son. She was no longer the mother I grew up with. My mother getting well made me an orphan. It didn’t seem fair. After all, I’d done everything right. I’d done exactly as my father told me. It’s a very difficult thing to change a person’s nature, to repurpose. I couldn’t be a part of her happiness. I knew too much of its cost.

Still, her marriage did open doors for my future. Freed from my obligation to the farm, I re-enrolled in secondary school and then left home for college. My mother and I remained in touch via post, but my leaving was for good. I never returned to Houlton.

I later attended medical school. After graduating, I published a paper in the *New England Journal of Medicine* arguing for a new treatment regimen for bipolar disorder involving anti-depressants and anti-convulsants. At the very same time, a former rival of mine published a similar paper with a slightly different combination of drugs. We argued heatedly in writing over whose research came first and whose treatments were more effective.

We finally squared off against each other at a medical conference in Albany, New York in the late 1960s. We locked eyes from across the stage and engaged in the first and last staring contest I’ve endured as an adult. We breathed through our noses. We shuffled our note cards loudly and communicatively against our podiums. The lights dimmed, the crowd took their seats, and then we went to war.

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### Poems for Freud

*Sharon Venezio*

1. **Poem of Denial**

I am not my young mother in her apron, blazed with anticipation. I am not half shadow not waiting, unanchored in the shifting.

I am not bird song, not feeder, not seed, not sun rising on unripe blueberries. I am not a deer head mounted on the hunter’s wall, not the tiny body lifted onto her uncle’s shoulders to caress the carcass, finger the wildly dead black eyes.

2. **Poem of Ego**

*after Evie Shockley*

Self-portrait with cat, with books organized by genre and size, with Rothko, with earth tones, with coffee and no cigarettes.

Self-portrait with light and shadow, with paroxetine, with butternut squash and Napa red, with half-read, with hipster friends too young to know.
Self-portrait with defense mechanisms, with wild delphinium, with flophouse hybrid bleeding heart, with howling mouth and listening moon. Self-portrait as you.

3. Poem of Eros & Thanatos

Photographing the world from the driver’s seat of an air conditioned car is not the best way to fall in love.

A good way to fall in love is to drive ten miles over the limit with no seatbelt,

or ride in a hot air balloon over Temecula shouting poems to the vineyards below,

or plant words like seeds, watch them rise.

A good way to fall in love is to have nothing left to say, to let fog envelop the day like diazepam,

or swallow a bottle of quiet white pills and wait for the bright hush of night.

4. Poem of Undoing

How many kinds of undoing are there? The word love in the back of the throat, mouth ajar, as I don’t say your name.

Is unhappiness a kind of undoing? The heart’s fault line, a fracture in the space between bodies.

My heart is a thirsty artichoke, each petal a different version of undoing.

If I knock three times, will you reappear?