

POETRY | FALL 2021

## Bilateral Tendencies

By Jen Karetnick

Elephantine after every casual stroll around the block, bricked  
with blisters from rubbing against sneakers that no longer fit,  
the backs of my ankles coil into themselves like broken springs. They

twin, distending the equivalent distance from the exact same spots,  
tusks of disjointed collagen that now have to be massaged into places  
of organization. My manicurist says that her meniscus tore because

guilt and fear were driving her consciousness. I don't deny that stress  
and upheaval play a role in pain or injury. But my tendons don't require  
relief from my head. Decades ago, when I tore both Achilles' playing soccer,

I was sent to the boys' football trainer, who side-eyed me and told me to  
walk it off. The coaches called me "Killer," played me until I scored

the winning goals. I never heard the barking from these future  
dogs, so hoarse with aggression they can't be let loose on the floor.

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**Jen Karetnick's fourth full-length book is *The Burning Where Breath Used to Be* (David Robert Books, September 2020), a CIPA EVVY winner, an Eric Hoffer Poetry Category Finalist, and a Kops Fetherling Honorable Mention. Her awards include the Tiferet Writing Contest for Poetry, Split Rock Review Chapbook Competition, Hart Crane Memorial Prize, and Anna Davidson Rosenberg Prize. Co-founder and managing editor of SWWIM Every Day, she has had work in *The Comstock Review*, *December*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Missouri Review* Poem of the Week, *Poet Lore*, *Terrain.org*, and elsewhere. Based in Miami, she works as a lifestyle journalist and is the author of four cookbooks, four guidebooks, and more. See [jkaretnick.com](http://jkaretnick.com).**

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