

I Was Pavlov's Dog

long before I knew why my heart
would flutter at the cock's call.

a bell flips my switch
to respond, exciting
my nerves, urging
limbs to motion.

Compelled,
I move.

Short. Hurried.

A quiet, stiff parade— futile
shoulders contain the warning
thump of the timpani within.

Synapses calm across thresholds,
along walls:
would-be barriers
against
would-be foes.

The pale line by my eye
marked my bones: a fowl legacy
drafted in marrow, a tale
long before I knew
why my heart would flutter.

Like picking scabs,
I witness my reactions, peeling
layers to a fleshy center:

if a bird's beak can train
a developing brain, what
of the scars, shaped
by man's graze?

Coded blueprint, structured
disarray, a shell shrinking
hollow,
and I obey.