

ROSS GAY

Ode to Sleeping in My Clothes

And though I don't mention it
to my mother
or the doctors
with their white coats
it is, in fact,
a great source of happiness,
for me, as I don't
even remove my socks,
and will sometimes
even pull up my hood
and slide my hands deep
in my pockets
and probably moreso
than usual look as if something
bad has happened
my heart blasting a last somersault
or some artery parting
like curtains in a theatre
while the cavalry of blood
comes charging through
except unlike
so many of the dead
I must be smiling
there in my denim
and cotton sarcophagus
slightly rank from the day
it is said that Shostakovich slept
with a packed suitcase beneath
his bed and it is said
that black people were snatched
from dark streets and made experiments
of and you and I
both have family whose life

savings are tucked 12 feet beneath
the Norway maple whose roots
splay like the bones
in the foot of man
who was walked to Youngstown, Ohio
from Mississippi without sleeping
or keeping his name
and it's a miracle
maybe I almost never think of
to rise like this
and simply by sliding my feet into my boots
while the water for coffee
gathers its song
be in the garden
or on the stoop
running, almost,
from nothing.