

*To Annie Von Behren:
Shot in the Head Onstage
Cincinnati, 1882*

by Sara Moore Wagner

There have been men
I would let shoot an apple
off my head, men who left
full bathtubs, stagnant, socks
piled next to the bed, who wanted me
to undo my will like Velcro, to undo.
Annie Von Behren, I know you,
how before you met him, you played
a man tied naked to a wild horse,
you rode the horse across the stage, eyes
wide, breasts taped. Oh body—
We play dead like this over
and over, ladies of lions, chasing
our own fame. There have been men
I would let point a rifle right
above my eye, to fire, who you'd believe
the pin slipped, it was an accident, a shame
your skull was not made to hold
a bullet, that you were made
to stay down, curtain call, lights
flashing. Come take your bow
in my room, I'm folding my husband's clothes
like secrets, and this would have been another

way to go—we can turn, just like that,
all flowers and lace, engage
the crowd, then fall to the dust, dropped
pistols, split face. Alive as metaphors
and names, just names.