



# Bones

journal for the short verse

no. 25  
April 2023

they downgrade the threat to high art

the alley windswept i fill a hummingbird

discharge notes each of three crows on a wire

the same anxious thought city moth

the ant in this thousand dollar a night hotel

amidst the mundane a terrarium

end of you snowdrops the first crocus after



glass squid looking for the party's corners

*guide to birdsong*  
putting a blackbird on  
in the rain

***Grief's length...***

...is an autocratic ruler. It listens for missed notes and raps on my knuckles.  
It makes me repeat it again and again...

sunrise locked in a minor key

***Note Left on Her Door***

Winter dark - - a path through frost and  
bare thickets, down to the footsteps

of daybreak, where the sun  
comes up beside an old bell tower. Follow the wind and the light

into the orchard, and open your eyes  
unto me

*Inside a Picture of Trees*

Aster vines between the trunks  
Sunlight  
cross-clipped by limb shadows

December  
and a line of oaks burned stark by the cold

The yellowberry and nettle  
share the grave of the poplar

Our world  
is long alone

***Prayer to The Muse***

Out of the rough instant,  
the second, the age,

*rain in black elms  
rain in the oaks, mist*

*of the high crowns*

you find me  
one flash ahead of my ear.

*Solomon, Soren  
Bloodfire, Persephone*

Find me, Queen of Birds,  
in rings of grief,  
in the illegible hour,

blind and abject without you.

### *Closing Lines*

It was the third week of March, cool wind  
around the house - - Easter Sunday,  
you cut the stem in two.

The roots sunk inward, hushed,  
as they shrank into dirt - -

tourniquet and trench fire  
empty seeds of Heaven . . .

October again, a quickened sundown.  
Those few words you left here  
still speak themselves - - cold petals  
in the narrowing threads of light.

now in his every childhood snapshot the face of sudden death



repeated in 31 languages a suffocation warning

caught in autumn's gravity  
my brother's first attempt at whistling  
ends with his missing teeth

watching swallowtails  
among goldenrods  
no thoughts on being human



spring an old demon but then that what it's for

the violence of history  
slowly as it rusts

shaving  
above the ear  
to fly better

when  
the game of the goose  
gets serious



fog clearing the future well-urned

2nd class ticket rain drops the night

first quarter moon no reason

night shore how search engines shape our world

the quarrel ends as it started electric guitar

stormclouds forming somewhere mark as read

afterlife  
i try the one that worked  
on you

that high lonesome when the rain ghosts us



what music within the turkey tail mushroom

wintering all the monsters in monochrome

passing train: orange juice tank tank orange juice

twittering sparrows  
decades of the rosary  
in 2/4 time

disassembling the lowest notes to find me

if I've done it right fishtail liner

the bible of scar tissue anchoring winter

music in the mirror's escape route



rain lessons the atlas of her hands

take a step back—  
the clouds  
become audible

semi-bold dark sense of an inward burning

dismantling the monument in Helvetica



***tryste***

wet rings inside wet rings ease the tight grain

*a reliquary*

the maul head split off its shaft, almost  
split the stump in half

*drēam*

upstage song sparks the hall smoke & such blue shadow of applause



***Unexpected Benefit of a Cancer Diagnosis***

garbage  
day tomorrow  
bin to the curb I let  
go to the wing-beats over my  
shoulder

*Inside, Moving Through Modified Martial Arts*

outside  
the cardinal  
sings out from the cherry  
tree into my head, thus changing  
subjects

sold a semi-automatic handgun theater

what if Sunday School was Saturday night rain in Memphis

some of the bread broken English

walking in a coat of course wool meditation

snow drifting in places I did not say goodbye

at peace with this raft I take everywhere



fog  
the sky finally  
has come to church

morning glory  
the blue song  
of the wall

Daniel Birnbaum

late at night  
the truth  
of an unshaven mirror

the apartments of birds  
and squirrels laid bare like bones  
this frost

breeze after 99 cuts so tart cherries may once more bloom in your mouth

her laugh tickles the sweaty moon in an inappropriate locale

bite of the apple. And we never spoke again. Though, in the film

black  
leaves shake  
a black mood  
back  
to Venus



sentences, unlike elephant steps, holding up my pants,

too  
fine  
to  
nestle  
in  
this  
dream  
your  
small  
hours  
snowfall  
voice

he asks  
of time  
in wind



branches  
depicting  
the quiet

circle simple  
color yellow  
one a moon

silence of autumn leaves well enough alone

mail order return of an exiled self



self-abscission  
at the pace  
of snow falling

***From the last gospel***

to revelation in this moment I speak out in the beginning word without  
word without word of robin violet snail where would gleam of syrinx  
petal tentacle out of a spiral strike...

a scrap of paper  
dropped  
feather frost-sparkled

### *Sanguine*

Wake of a red priest scarlet woman vermilion trail of a cardinal's hat a  
cheek turns crimson

maple leaf point  
at a fingertip  
blood on the bow

***Vegan vanilla***

The herbivorous dinosaur savours the pearlescent glaze of the ice-cream  
defrosted from time as every crystalline moment melts into memory

a brooch of bones  
her godmother's  
parting gift

pitch perfect pines

pray prey  
keep an  
eye out

now's  
an  
insider  
coffin

push  
(s)ing

pull  
(s)ing

*after Robert Lax*



at a minimum wage war

no  
ex  
posing

***Crow (Fibonacci)***

Crow's  
poor  
skull was  
perfectly  
intact apart from  
the lower beak which swung loose no  
matter how many times we wedged it back into place  
only with much lamentation  
did Crow and his skull  
return to  
darkness  
and  
peace

Italian restaurant  
winding melancholy  
around a fork

rejected i kick the sun into the river Styx

when will bats fly from my two open windows

spring butterfly lost in the camera obscura

moon shot the american way



mug morning craving not to be born again craving

sinking in the monochrome rain

dictionary palace of the winds



a drunken boat anchors in my library

the stamps have fallen off my letters

an ocean's roar finds itself a bedroom

upside down talking the other hemisphere



three white silos  
of sequential height  
according to her needs

one door to the next  
crossing the tiled corridor  
to dance with orchids

stepping out of sleep I become an adverb

kireji farming sea stars' arms

uphill all the way to unfinished

if only to refine a black hole's palate

the foehn leans into  
over through & against  
a lexicon

the conspiracy of the spider webs in the cosmos



the moon on the mountain on the lake the mountain under the moon

above the smog a layer of birds

morning moon where you stood just yesterday

the beam  
stuck in  
mine own eye

the cross

*TOTEM*

over  
thought  
a

head  
chiseled  
over

my  
own

**CHENGELKOY\***

the  
bend  
in

the  
strait  
pulled  
on

fishing  
line

***JIHANGIR\****

down  
enough  
steps  
to  
have

lost  
count  
of  
all

the  
sea

*for Asu*

solstice

apricot

apricity



the  
clouds  
rain

the  
rain  
puddles

the  
puddles  
clear

into  
skies

pan pipes quavering through suburbia the fruit of the apple tree

mute swan just asking for a friend

for the foreseeable future the moon offline

a perfect enso . . .  
now how  
to get out

open to emptiness rain falls into my insomnia

blowing leaves past our example-setting years

onward  
christian  
soldiers  
cherry-picking  
leviticus



***nonet, in which katie entertains the idea of great-uncle ken pulling her baby  
tooth at the norfleet family christmas gathering: december 12, 1998***

You consider *how many?* he's pulled  
over *HOW many?* years while he  
wiggles your loose mouth bone; spins  
yarns 'bout stringing teeth to  
doorknobs, yanking with  
pliers. Little

eyes turn big—

*\*pop\* There*

*'tis!*



***nonet, in which katie bleeds through on a multi-hour window-shopping  
trip to the somerset, ky walmart supercenter with granny: 2006***

*S'that time of the month. She had an acc—  
she booms to cashier ( / entire store)  
before your cough interrupts.*

*Tag's on her side. Red-faced,  
you hoist hips up. Clerk  
shoots scan gun. Rip  
plastic. Ain't  
Minnie  
Pearl?*

eros  
falling on the bones  
of kittens

transcribing my sins buffer overflow

dusty windshield the patina of somewhere

in the drawer where I keep my voices

tic-tac-toe  
so it goes  
Maundy Thursday



graveyard grass will I miss it

autumn rain—  
my hollow breath conflated

a bleeding lamb speaks of roses in exile

if I could pick one thing it's the fast fading light

no less than a whisper away this mountain dew

the rain missing me a green comet

*In My Father's Final Bout*

he never eyed the fade-away hook  
that knocked him out but still felt  
the cold compress on his head,  
still heard the ringing, decades later,  
fingers still traced his sore jaw,  
bleeding nostrils, black eyes.

Even in the end, his hands made fists.

*From the third floor I watch you*

step in a short emerald dress  
across fading white square  
of worn-out asphalt, spit, repeat.  
Where you're headed, Isabel,  
there must be something better  
than an empty half-lit room—  
something that wants to unlock.



*Sleepy Lonely*

Unable to concentrate or distinguish  
my hand from a groundswell of singing starlets,  
my mind digs up a childhood time capsule:  
upswing whip of your blonde ponytail,  
spokes of my bicycle fluttering an ace,  
second hand stuck—past present future one,  
waiting for your steely blues to flutter.

## GATELESS GATE

It's a set of stairs  
that knows your name  
as you fall.

Mark J. Mitchell

### *Vernacular*

Give me a seagull with a  
positronic brain & I'll  
give you the next leader  
of the modern world. A  
simple upgrade — that's  
all they're waiting for. That,  
& gluten-free food scraps.

*hung out*

to dry, sometime be-  
tween the solstice &  
the lunar new year

*character assassination*

If there's a  
Charlie in  
the drama

then

inevitably

they're the  
one who  
cops it in

the end.

*A rattled saber*

Is a matter of  
structure. Pattern,  
or growth—some  
thing like that.

Is a biological  
entity, stress  
on the bio, not  
much logic to it.

the verses they don't mention inferno

swallowing a gospel whole whale

matthew markworth



smiting a fig tree out of season words

cloistered and yet surprisingly bubbly

cicadas start up the suicide machine



this morning's sunrise  
something something  
mass extinction

entirely enough alone unsatisfied orchid

after blossoming back in the holster

all anyone talks about is the chatbot year's first dream



hunting mainly small mammals we replace ourselves every seven years

all day snow gathers the broken machines

a wilderness of blue irises—  
so this is how  
you will use my future

but what if love...  
or if the clouds  
repeat our gestures

all my glass gestures...  
winterlight  
in a rented room

hearing of your death,  
I walk through  
three decembers

Michael Battisto

keep eating the hours:  
put on the north,  
that great, gray coat

evening in the linden trees—  
for how many lives  
can I be your voice?

Michael Battisto



wanting her to remember what was not to forget

all shade on the north face no shadow

drawing the line at drawing the line

blow away the tiny spider on the book with spring breeze

Sip'n Dip Lounge: the mermaid who wears a nose plug

dwarf ginseng on the freshly laundered doilies

river stone staying right where she is

pale green whirligigs before I could read



***Unwelcome Relativities***

out of time a few nuts scatter waterspouts collapse

*the smoldering remain punchlines out of time*

the power line hums out of time checkmate in two

*out of time composting welts of loose threads*

that bloody shirt knot to be falls out of time

*tuba skinny out of time on the downbeat*

***Revergocity***

where he gets his tripwire

a short hop crater to grave

back sleeper mattresses savor your canyon

faster than rivers past sausage factories

hard and fast a down and out hollow

flutter dome stirs a ceiling of swallows

specimen pine trained when to weep



touching her keepsakes to dust each one

stage left one lemon of a still life

the same sound track coming as geese going

rising water level with you damn dirty apes



she owns me petting the cat o' nine tails

my morning head a donut of protest

road breaks in white lips

he stands trapped in the early light of my chest

rushing to where the black balloon bursts into an insight

field edged with ice  
the shrieks of blue jays  
the shock inside

margins of white petals

flowering shadows wave

the dark night of the soul

attention pivots as on

a dewed fibrous tip

then petals the forest



beyond rocks the body  
retreats to the drop-  
off visible in grief

fir and cedar fragrance  
growing a simpler  
transpiration of space

escarpment empties of  
wind the crows settle  
friction in perception

dew      on      daffodil  
perianths the feeling of  
scent    in    transperence

wintergreen's white a  
splash of light on rocks  
this freshwater high

wind unheard stops

the other winds

still in the word

reflected clouds a-  
drift in river ice  
this ordinary life

### ***Ballad***

The woman living inside the walls of our house is called Ann. Before being immured she dreamt of becoming a painter's muse and wife. Eventually, she married a carpenter who walled her into the building he was working on...the very house that we live in now. During the day she is still, probably sleeping. But during the night she does nothing else but sings woeful folk songs. Through my sleepless nights instead of counting sheep, I count the hot and cold drops of her laments as they fall upon my brow.



### *The ladder*

Father is napping. His sleep seems undisturbed. No noise can reach him. Viewers and flowers are everywhere. In a trance, mother keeps telling us that she could never have imagined that a man's body might weight less than a lamb. Mostly carnations. Some red and some white. If the body is well hidden, the soul cannot find it and eventually departs. Where once a walnut grew, now there is a ladder he must climb to reach the sky.

heat swelling south of her equator

the hum of highways inhaling green meadows

moon ghosting the machine of the sea's teeth

*Unsharp*

In her reading, only one spoken word is too young for any inner doubt.

vector arrows  
I ponder the problem  
of the roadless sky

***Omission***

mother's day begins with disturbing pigeons

out of okays autumn rain

not a word repeating the riverwalk

enclosing the sky of a necessary possession

to see i stain the apple's flux

nowhere in the middle of somewhere bloodied





the translator how one word makes the rain



the blue river  
a poet  
plants a surface

chasing a deer the letter A

a question  
scenes  
of red Mexico

trying to tiptoe around the animals

the blue boat upriver in the Ganga realizes it doesn't exist

chicken wing refuses to be eaten until it is loved



the wind  
there  
on my night table

dreaming in a foreign currency

Roberta Beach Jacobson

weeds

## *Cygnus*

swans  
on the river  
at night  
silver swans  
in the night  
the night  
on the river  
a silver river  
at night  
the swan  
in the river  
of night

the sound of his glove found in the toolbox

the length of the measuring tape the memory coils into itself

the weight of a 5 lb hammer centerstrikes the ten penny big bang

9" double edge carbide blade shark teeth rip through the nothing was said



alto sax shaped cat's claw pry wide black night what he said stripped every dream

cold cut steel light clamors against the unspoken the toolbox opened

why the odometer stops taxing the snow

this blue over that on the viola's tongue

violets still fat while dissolving the symptoms

fissures leaving the womb a skinless god

we are walking through three ages an inch away





house next house not even sparrows shared

dawn  
atom

i  
stic

embr  
yon

ic  
a

bort  
ed

they  
return

full

from

diff  
erent

stars

full  
of  
light

of

stars

thru and  
the glass  
mask  
dawn's  
tongue  
tastes  
talons  
and  
glass  
talons

in  
waves

imp  
ing

on  
waves

a  
wing

on  
thine

pressed  
upon

hell

heaven  
pressed

upon

a  
tad

pole's  
mouth

it  
is  
rain  
ing  
is  
it  
rain  
ing  
it  
is

al  
ready

pulled

over

them

the

sleep  
ing

smoke

giant



lonely  
to the  
garden  
away  
goes  
evening  
singing  
blue  
falls  
inside

the  
voice            of  
                 birds

on  
the  
horse

on  
the  
flight            on  
                 the  
                 eye

the dragon still lives in an old wall phone

royal blue dragonfly towards the island of Kythera

quiet stream the sentence of least resistance

moonmilk exchanging opinions on opiliones

her body defies the grammatical attitudes

the peeing sun blurs the world



her eyes suck things like breasts

at her navel the lack

i exist like a dislocated organ

### ***Kaffeeklatsch***

I take my coffee with a lot of cream and sugar, like a wussy. Or you could say, I take my cream and sugar with a heavy dash of coffee, which keeps things exciting.

walking on hands the sober man



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Johannes S. H. Bjerg who also supplied the photos.

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