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SHOOTING THE WALL

BY

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Bachelor of Arts, Prescott College, Prescott, AZ, 2004

THESIS

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS
IN CREATIVE WRITING, POETRY

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for Coki, still.

ONE

If man, indeed, learned his music and his dance by imitating birds, was it not possible that he learned his art by imitating elephants?

James Ehmann *To Whom It May Concern: An Investigation of the Art of Elephants*

PLENARY

I shake at the exit and into a twig put orison.
Into the twig, and how could it hold this, but it did,
held, as plenty's ether can go into a single atom
and we ask shape, as we need uranium, this has taken
place, this gray twig in February branching is nothing
less than what I put there and I cannot name what
is inside it now, simply twig twig twig. What I could no longer
put into you, did you live up to, you did, you only
said enough. Some of us are full. Some of us are full as twigs
of you, there is a tree somewhere waiting. I falter
that there are those not holding for what has them hanging
out tongues for wafers, I falter that I will leave them,
but not the creek buried to the left and the right.
What there is to gather, gather in bouquets.

ISLE, NO LANGOUR

It's not the glass,
 it's the world is blue, the window barely,
 mountains, clouds, trees,
 yard, etch of branch
 to climb of crow
 clime of sky.
 You wouldn't warn of melting now.
 Maybe the conifer berries
 at the edge of the frame
 were blue before all this.
 As blue as
 white makes the lips,
 breath makes the day, like
 you in your wet make the bed. Pull the snow round,
 fluff the heather, it's
 February, the February of our mouths.
 It's not the glass,
 we chewed the vases down. A little more
 severe, he asks of us,
 makes us hopeless. Troika of polar bears seen from above,
 or any creature
 licking the salt with the buried blade.
 Surely they will find us
 following the trail of our cut gums.
 Whose voice is this,
 wanting in the night from out of the woods,
 the gessoed woods. There is no more coal,
 crude oil, no more wick,
 only the rushlights we saved
 from another continent when we were knee-high in field.
 Waters rising will make it
 colder before it burns. No scarlet
 arctics for us. We chisel ice into the likenesses of tapirs
 and they whistle, flamingoes
 and they tremble. Warbling tails, leopards chuff
 to get out. Truant sea, corporeal snow falls as I
 at your feet.

topped the levee, an ivory pistol shooting
for bottom, the pigs keep your father waiting, but he

could have loblollied them
any time, could have elmed them,
maple. Instead pretty
pretty Mabel Louise
and he boxcarred.
July is the month we earn our keep,

when the pigs
are alone there and we're unable
to reach them,
we listen so hard the planet glows
in a way that Oleander does not.

WHEN INTEGRITY INTO THE FIRE

Love's voice
Love's voice
Love's voice
Love's voice

Deception: I'll play Thou
Love: Unfit actress, you'll play the Speaker

Deception said I'm not
afraid of being lonely
but of being
alone with the dead
thing in my chest.

Love's voice never tires.
Love doesn't sleep.

Love doesn't shower.
Love doesn't eat.
Love keeps the walls up
jawing to datura.
Love vines out,
walks to the river,
clasps the bottle
to a roof in Bedford
hears no life, no wind.
Love has never kneeled,
thinks autumn hurts.

Deception said autumn hurts,
of all the ones I miss
green is the worst. Winter
forgets to spill. Everything
I know is a mouth so open
seeds call out from it.

Love or
fortitude?

Think of the days we spent in trenches,
(said Deception) though we never
spent days in trenches. Think of it anyway.
The pith on our coats, the mud in our boots,
the shells raining. I never deserted.
Our war cry: *there's more time!*

They were blue in the face, the hovering
face, the ragged face, the distich face
staring at the abyss they'd made.
Or: *We don't think of you as lonely!*

I beg you, don't be an ocean.

When Love curls
into a palm there is listening,
but not from above.
Love said here's what
I'll be: the tooth
and nail, the squandered street
beneath my own name.
When no one is.
But over my shoulder.
But all yours. Don't.
Don't away.

Deception said to love
these incursions for your raft
and Love said thus I sail off.

Deception said truth was your arms
and Love said the lie
was my look and I
didn't know whom to believe
and Defeat offered me
a chair then Victory
offered a martingale and I
took both.

The fermata was lost
and won and Love
said show me how you'll live
without me, I want to know you can,
and I called Death—
let's make this good,
so Death gave me a cloak and an anchor
and a tern and a rope and a breath. I noosed
my neck and ate the winged thing, leapt
off the anchor onto shore,
left the cloak so they'd know
I'd done it. Then pled
kill me. These red leaves.

decomposing
 but it's everything, what
 I can't hold the way I hold
 the white sail and never wave it, but I
 surrender, I go to Mexico, cross the border
 in the boat, vow not to stay
 unhinged, voice is the last
 ring before bullets and I've come to this shore,
 what suffers moves
 toward what suffers. Pancho Villa,
 you don't know how he loved,
 what he looked on, you and I, we were a flood and
 I'm going blind you don't know with what fervor, my all
 has taken me by the neck.

THE GIRL OF YOUR LIKING

Fiddleheads won't you wait to unfurl, I hold out my hand cured
 of the purse seine. The hands done brought the house down, the eyes,
 the most they can do is close, not close. The child's on the beach. Am I not
 maternal? I feel unspecific—yellow in summer, sleep
 on the tracks,

te lo prometo.

Promise me one thing in exchange. Every time her back is turned
 we embrace and your arm falls where gravity took it when we were young.

Stark mad I don't want what you drop. I want to fill the ocean
 with rocks, to hear your jackal-toothed bride crying out
 over the sea drift. Let her salt her luck with her own
 sweat, swim toward the cavalcade.

The first day without rain. Through the kitchen window balding white men
 mount motorcycles for the police parade. Bring me the plastic gun
 from the trailer outside of Nogales,
 seduce me with it, stark naked in the yard.

A gun does not keep promises. Goes off. Goes not off. The afternoon
 grasses turning gold, I'll shut my eyes to keep. I am the one telluric
 girl you have left. You'll call your wife into the house, but she'll stare at the sun
 not liver-bellied of blindness as I am of you.

there is more.

Where could I go
tied as I was to the echo?

What color could I call
the absence,
and what the ten in the brush
who will be sated, and what
the dog's rope ringing the beam?

The deer come gorging on.

Afternoon grass,
sweetbark. Luz won't leave
the farm, though her chest is full of what deer
are the doorway to. Her rebozo
a bright desert flower
flung down into the grove.

Her table is wood and it is long and
Josue—the General—takes his seat
though the china is empty. Food gone to the cause. Is this famine?
It smells like forest. Grins flinch across his face
to her next of kin as they think bulbs,
mire and mould,
convening with starving night,
plot how to feed the horde.

I take off my veil, my white
gown, take Luz away
into my meadowed dream, tame
this hunger with a whip.
They have vertebrae showing
like they have knives to carve me out.
Give venison
to the toddlers
sausage to the armies.

How will her corn raise? If there is sand under her plow? How

and the rainy season arrives,
 the tin roof
 beaten, floods turn roads
 into the clay you must churn through,
 calf-high.

 A boy points you
 toward a house over the hill.

Seek it, Josue. *Yes,*
 someone lives there, his hands
 stubby poplars backed by clouds
 as he waves. A mile
 through the mud and past the animals.

 Ears flat
 against flea-ridden skulls under the monsoon.
 You come upon the house,
 a few boards and no roof
 all black from a fire, no one around,
 and the people back in town
 not knowing. Imagine keeping
 the house
 as a pet,
 it prefers the lift of heat to rain
 pressing from above.

 Fix it meals of this.

Tonight is light's charnel, there
 is no water without air,
 the heavier the better,

 you're almost under,
 down into the encored wave, drop
 between the stones, to tireless flumes and flukes. Why wait?
 A gust from air
 froths you flat,

 l'oro my tesoro my mai.
 A brown flock flits hedgerow to curb,
 a car, a deer, la Luz,
 the destiny of eyes, and still
 the wound on your thigh has not
 been dressed. Where did it come from?

A curtain descends adagio red (gold
my treasure my never) at last
to sing down the sun.

And the ash rose
like egrets above the new swamp
you never walked back through
and during his seizure
the boy smelled ammonia. The birds, the vanilla of her passing.

RIFT

From the balcony looking onto your dad's car and the Mexican
and the white horse

on its side, I am the white
horse baying *lancha*, we will always

wonder, the woody stalks of the bush red

postponing, to attract,

especially in winter, nothing else

pollinating. The red is holed up in walls

of bark waiting

for the day

it can climb aboard

and bloom across the river. Or, if not

give them boats, then turn them

into fish, grow gills at their necks. We won't

name plants among the color-blind, a plant

can't fly a jet or solve this white-out.

I can't go on,

visibility is so low

the snow under the red

lines of the bush implores off left.

Beseech, and you will regret for your life.

Full-fisted I held it up. *Release*

said the pine *the quebrada tied inside*. It is a good day

when the prisoners

are released. I asked the pine

to take them from me. To the grazing herd
 the little one pointed: *Look! Poppies*. The only sound
 hair pulled aside
 as bodies condensed and flicked up, sunburned
 and staring against the wall.

It was the end I worried. I know
 a way to ask the air, Mother Mother Mother Mother the worst has come take me
 with you where I can't follow. The worst not over,
 but now. No more waiting

now. Now, little was I when once. And what I knew
 of you would tear me

limb from limb, would not leave me
 a floor to stand on. You, I have loved
 beyond time, I have never
 thought to sever. *Adios mi pais* they begin to cross. Wind
 strikes an abdomen clung with coralroot, the sea
 through the ears of a mare.

It's water they're swimming they're drowning they're swimming.

We must owe more
 than 10 centavos and "Amazing Grace"
 stand along the banks with our arms open, our chests slung
 with mirrors. *I'm sorry*

blinds the north. *So long* they touch the way
 to violets, to trillium the rest of their lives,
 in our best Latin screaming *Jesus*. What
 have we accomplished

if we have won? *Domine Domine Domine*. Every night a cloudbreak.

again, a deer. I knew

there must be another. What matter. Taken care
through the grass-shot snow, hocks
that leapt to begin away stopped,

returned, tip-toed

across the ice-road,

re-crossing me. Backlit

by a streetlight the deer went stark as its shadow, and tied
at the hoof, bent to eat out of the other's mouth.

the level stare. Stop spitting your /'s, for god's sake.
What is another word for empty?
My ax lunges into the deer heart, who folds
her front legs, rests her forehead on mine, whose pulp buckets out,
bailing onto my shirt. Here is the red re-acquaintance.

TWO

When we see animals in confinement—an elephant that cannot engage in its elephantness, deprived of its own kind, of its aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews, and in many cases even of sunlight, and certainly deprived of territory, it is not surprising to see them engaged in various unusual behaviors to help keep their minds together.

Michael W. Fox qtd. in *To Whom It May Concern: An Investigation of the Art of Elephants*

It is an implication that there are degrees of reality.

Wallace Stevens

ON SILENCE-2.11.09

What goes inside cannot come out again. Do I intend to communicate—I can be silent and still gesture, and the world will know what I mean. Not dryly my gaze goes inside you. I can say *fuck you* silently, it's cultural, not linguistic. In a vow of silence, what is my aim? To make no noise or to suffer no communication? If the latter, I've lost—in the world of associations, I can't walk from tree to bush to sniper without connoting something at least vegetal. Though I want to choose the next word slowly. That is what I ask silence to teach me. Snakes rain from the Banyan. And hit the ground where gravity coils them before they go off away from the tree in every direction, one toward where I stand stunned hearing no hissing. But I am told the snakes coming are tongues, the Banyan is idiom, so what has been exiled? Another way of saying I have been silenced—to exile, to ex-communicate, is to keep at bay what desires nothing more than to return. To language, the country of our birth. And there is a small or great silence between certain words, or written into certain poems, that we experience as a hole in the ground, a loamy floor. Dove, *dove* into the hole. With volition. And associated the fall with silence. But could climb out to the next word. Two quiets: holes keep us within (though we can climb out), exile keeps us without (and what goes inside me stays here). As I am without what I love when I don't speak. And knew what would not come back from it. And knew the danger of it. Meaning: silence is not the vagal response, which you could not help, you who I loved above myself. Instead, it is the will of the silencer, and will is a tyrant. The vagal response, what the body does when overwhelmed, slow down to near-dead, make quiet the heart, it is to hide from the coveted thing, whereas in exile I stare through the wall's chink all day. And I can see you fainted under the heat and I'm wondering how long you will be dead for. Because a vow is something said out loud.

FAKE IRAQ'S BLOOMING—POSIES

Sudden grass on the paths of the garden maze
and the children must. Running, roses
scent the interior, blurring to pure color
as they streak by—the red into the pink into
the fuchsia whites into yellow. The leaves green
into the greater green of bush and ground cover.
To run, and with their mouths agape, swallowing echoes
until they think warm days will never cease. Last night I
couldn't herd the city's denizens, the traffic
flowed around the wheel-chaired man, a bird fanned black
in his arms, a vein for each name you'll need
to recall later. The prick in the chest when he asked
what is this tree? What kind? Which species? The interrogator
is waiting. The roses at night do not sleep, not a betrayer
among them, not a betrayed.

ON SILENCE-2.18.09

Silence is carried in the body as noise is external. Held in the silence a body of secrets. Silence, held, is not apathetic about leaving, wants to stay held and demands always the question of how to break it. How will I, when the time comes, stop this? What will be enough? The brain struggles constantly to create patterns. But I can find no pattern in silence, and neither irregularity. It arises when we can no longer keep anything out, and so we keep silence in. As our only available means. And learn it isn't true what we've ever said about the animals, sentient or no. Silence emerges most often within a larger pattern of itself—a culture of silence. From there we call it by other names: distance, interior, burial. What millet held inside the seed. Someone can coax it out, not I. How will I know I've been pardoned if you will not tell me? I take on your silence in order to dispossess you of it, to take into myself what in you was unreachable. The dogs are baying in a wave down the canyon, this cry is to fill up the outside, this silence is versus the stillness inside each thing. You want to know what they're warning? What has been prevented? You want to see what gangue gilds the middle of the hill? Crack open each rock, split the maples. What we rape for, the inside. Open your legs, says the hooded man holding the reins, and we'll see what we can do, not knowing silence is not one to negotiate. Because my words will not come back to me as I hope. And will not come back at all. If I am among those who think desire drives the world, it isn't with silence I'm holding court. Oh wait, I wanted this.

FAKE IRAQ'S BLOOMING—DAY ONE

I take cover on the banks. The river, torrential under the snow, swells, laps its edges, takes ice back into itself, reeds secure the boundary. Let me see what I know its current passes over, the fish eggs and moss-drawn rocks, there even if I can't see them coupling. This is the mercurial time for development, but development slows, and tears down, and stops, mounds of sand from what was left of the desert we chipped. Medaled, I will know a new light, weighted with miracles they hung me with, from the flat roof I can hear our men's nail guns

one two three

one two

one two three do something.

Call them guests, workers, Salaam, salute, let me onto a porch that is lit and mine. The snow and desert are *give of this* and someone is strangling me from behind, whose black gloves smell so predictable.

ON SILENCE-2.25.09

Every Wednesday I take silence. Hours are freed in not speaking. Each week I forget what I've learned, my tongue swells with impatience. It is an apprenticeship with silence. That I enter with my head bowed. To a teacher not as gentle as I keep expecting. Silence bids me sit in the corner and think about what I've done. What I haven't done. I have not protested each thing enough, as this could be protest. As if you would not talk, show them *sing* so they know song's choice. To show I wanted this. I chose this. Each Wednesday when I wake up I think *today I cannot talk* and always fall back, immediately asleep, to my loud dream. I forget to ask everything on the other six, and so on Wednesdays I am flooded. So when I say birth I mean bursting. As Nijinsky, in his last public performance, sat in silence for a half an hour after arriving an hour late. His absence in that hour was the first silence, his unspoken limbs while he was in the chair were the second. The third? The third fell on the crowd after he said *I will now dance for you the war. The war you did not help to prevent*. How could they survive this rebuke? They survived because there was no artillery in the theater. How will I survive not telling you this? I cannot even tell you tomorrow. The greater silence of you, as each thing is blanketed in winter. If a bomb is silent, the fourth silence came when he danced, were his arms holding guns or the wounded? What was he carrying other than his irregular mind? What was inside him? Was he opened up? Flayed? Flagrant? It is buried. He was never filmed, his image will not answer. The silence is buried in my not being able to see you, whether I can remember you or not. Who remembers the war? Who remembers which side he was on? And who will come forward to say? If I could ask you. Each leap, was it a near miss? *En pointe*, what was aimed, and evaded, what? What we know is this. There was no fourth silence, not there. A bomb is not silent. Not even a bomb, but you.

FAKE IRAQ'S BLOOMING—DAY TWO

All the trees lie down, soldier. A field prone, broken
under too much water. Call it dementia, you know my fears,
mold them, an opera of what maddens us, from point A to
point B a killing spree quickens the plot. Mow down
the crowd, I can be your will-machine. *For my part*
I fall for the stellar's jay. Facedown the sun
burns me, even this snow is staged. Has every man fallen? Brava! Brava! Lucia
was tricked, thought everyone was you, a way to you,
then why murder them? From this
bunker see the lit world onto which I open, the boars wheeling
beneath a heaven, darked stones, the cool
against the wall. What if I freeze lying here,
on a pool still and ice-rimmed, if I cannot
make the voices quiet?

ON SILENCE-3.4.09

The fourth silence comes at the abandonment of the act. There is no non-act, the silence never comes. Then what was the noise that fell on us when Conchita Cintron, bullfighter, dismounted from her horse when the red bull called her down? Ankle deep in arena both. *I finally met him* she said. First, she abandoned her horse and what did he hear, then as the bull rushed, she abandoned the sword, and what did it hear of her as she quit it? And how did you respond? From there could you hear it fall? If you love me why do you not kill me? The Spanish monarch waved his hand over the scene and all who saw him heard him. To be seen is it different than to be heard? And to be heard is it different than to understand? I understand your silence. A woman's heels on the killing soil flout authority. Flauta. The music of her arrest, even as she carressed the ears of the bull *perdon perdon perdon* and the monarch waved his hand the other way to undo it. They abandoned the handcuffs. The crowd who cried an average of three hours a day stopped. And she abandoned the ring that day forever. The sound that could not be undone was emptied. Were you listening? Did you hear the crash of all her other oxen killed under the weight of her hand when she unsheathed her want? Said *I did not want to kill him*. Abandoned desire. To do something else. There was no fourth silence.

FAKE IRAQ'S BLOOMING—DAY THREE

The tanks travel with our meat on the hoof
touch the rabbit fur to hear the howling behind,
something in pursuit of white and deer arc
over the path on the hill, showing
the page of each raised tail. Mojave, I am a fool
enough for silence or breeze-crowned fir trees
where I buried my sadness my ever green
liver takes root and I take my learning from a fist, not quite
cloud, not quite my life-centered you: what is
the yellow patch that hangs above.
Antler in, the future is vicious with a black
nose flared, high scent on the scree trail.
Is this something I've seen or something I carry—
endangered and struck between us when we catch eyes,
mine close, his wide and opaque glass-bottomed lakes.
The herd's all behind him. Hot breath rolls as a warning
for coming terror. Come closer. Give me back what I've buried.

ON SILENCE-3.11.09

I don't believe in silence anymore. Bas Jan Ader, is he screaming or laughing? He is crying. And for a man, I learned from my father, it is a mixture of the two. Soundly. I hear sound. Reverberating from the flexed throat. He can't open his eyes, but looks down as though salvation or torture were in his lap. What happens there outside of the frame? The source of what makes him cry? The final seven seconds. *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, too sad to be out loud does he mean, or too sad to use language? I can't tell if he's trying to cry or trying stop. The onions aren't working, only the smoke in my eyes. I have cried like this. Only an individual makes this noise. A crowd cannot. The crowd that cried on average three hours per day is a drone, never a wail. There is no such thing as silence. In the last seven seconds, what else can we vow? Or silence is carried in the lie of color, and here he gives us himself in black and white. Or words are never precision, but a face may be and imprecision is a lie and a lie is a silence. And here he gives us his face. A face unlike any other. Is the unique a sort of horn? Collapse the eyes. Shut the hole of the dark mouth. I say one is louder than two. I cannot find silence because of memory playing assist to imagination. Because sound the easiest to recreate by the imagination. *I have a song in my head*. Watching Bas Jan Ader, whose name is either a song or a cry, I remember the sound of cry and everything that trembles, as his throat trembles, stirs at once from within. And as long as there is the naming of cry, Bas Jan Ader, as long as things can be named, we will count them off in our rattled minds. *I have a cry in my head*. It is love as I have known it. Such is our desperation to tell, that whatever cannot get out yells against the inner walls until eroticized. But when we have watched him, watched him try to stop, watched him try to start in what he thought was silence, voice the temblor, the walls heat with vibration, swell, redden. Or only an echo—not true sound from when Bas Jan Ader went out to sea and in *lost* falls the silence. What cannot return.

coupled with whom, who paid whom
 attention, whose arms were too small to reach.
 Whose shoulders.
 Bared as teeth.
 Muscle knots along your ribs
he has not
touched me here, your will not done,
 ears conch what
 we haven't heard from him. What say you, done
 nothing or done something? Chosen
 to come with you into a tunnel
 opens onto all language
 braided into unwall'd green.
 And if there will be a hanging, he'll hang
 from his feet,
 not his ears
 like a rabbit. Together we don't own enough
 fingers to finger the guilty. *If I am afraid of you,* he begins, *then I must die inside*
the dead horse. If I must die
inside the dead horse, it will be red. If it is red I will be
in flames before I die. Don't look at his reflection in the cot's metal leg,
 small and convex and dripping
 from under his temple and ask which man
 has been under a meadow of whooping cranes, and which man is the fleck of red.
 Look, the white meadow lifts,
 bodies of starlings
 drop to the road

ON SILENCE-3.18.09

When the god told me to go *out*, the god did not mean back to this hill, I step around the thousand ears sprung since last time I was here, garden of ears. The fourth silence could only be unoccupied space, in the ring it was everything except the red bull's *querencia*. What I cannot describe of the listening garden here, the ear canals are tap roots, flesh forget-me-nots. Who is the hill listening for? Silence. I am outside. My *querencia*, I do not move the same. I told you, we cannot hear what we cannot see. The *querencia* is I/ Thou. Without you I am silent. With. Out. How will I want now? Desire becomes purpose. Desire was not achieved, it was quit, it was turned away. What can I do? It was so clear, what god said. The bull, no matter how much moaning, we cannot hear. Among the other animals. Elephants, deer, pins of rain, our favorite sound we said, a silent agreement. Hill, do you hear me, step loudly. A hill, we cannot hear. It was so clear, what god. And when I thought I would see no nature, the bluest bird. Impossible stalks of black and the living. If you were here. You the living, you the beloved, you the *querencia*, I would not have seen it. A bird cannot be thou, as bird cannot be cup and saucer we break what shatters Wednesdays. The silence of a bird is the worst. I said it didn't exist, found it where I cannot go. Silence is where we do not go.

ON SILENCE-3.25.09

Walking down the path by the train tracks, to where the rusted machines are beds for the homeless. Machines rivetless and red. Each wall to hold a potential beyond *holding*, to suggest a use beyond utilitarian. The potential for a wall does not have to—must not—be known at the time of building. It only has to be different enough from all the walls we have ever known, to render us malleable. Like these machines, curled or bunkered or turned on a side. We must be able to use a wall for other than a sound-proof barrier. What keeps us out is that we don't know the origins of material. Kept apart from our understanding of plastic, or sheet metal, of insulate or plaster. Apart from understanding, as I understand your silence. Because we haven't poured or flattened or melted, we are at a loss for how to change each material's purpose. Each thing inexorable. We cannot pull them, as I could not pull you out of yourself into me, and we want to make each thing *of us*. The new remains silent until it bears our mark and is old. We cannot speak to the foreign, can only be native to something when we know where it breaks. I turn left at the river, now running parallel. The path ends where a plank is laid across a ditch. When I come to the house with no windows, rather the panes had been shattered, leaving only windows. I shimmy through a window, see a hole in the ceiling, then one on the second floor through the roof. The dust is in the light the floors are covered with it. An upright piano claims the middle of the room that would have been the main room if any of the rooms were in use. *There is a piano in the house.* The only thing I wouldn't have left behind. As when you and I went to the burned-out house in the desert and the sky was louder than it had ever been, you decided to live roofless, I knew I wanted sound enough I would vow silence to anyone who would listen. We must know how the thing we touch will break. The piano in the middle of the room had half its keys missing. I have never heard a chord so well as when I could see inside to the unravelling hammer. Never, but in a crumbling room. A note knows what to do with the dead, doesn't pretend to be alone.

FAKE IRAQ'S BLOOMING—LIEUTENANT MURPHY

Does anything get on you in Bahariya,
 a war cleaner than kissing, nothing
 but maybe a little of your own blood. Not mine,
 you're only my in-law. Does the heat usher you inside?

We're inside for so long
 as adults, for so long when buried.

Depth is a lie, the lake
 is a mirage, less offensive. Before you went
 to Fake Iraq, you gave me your green shorts, Marines only, said
 don't wear them until you're off base. They would die in the playground
 my sister, knowing, described of a bomb. And you're a murderer, I said.

A murderer
 if *will* be

a murderer. Hired actors scream from beneath cars, trained
 how it sounds, to deafen air.

What you'll miss more than limbs,

in war where to reveal
 is to betray,

are the blink of mornings through curtains,
 your kitchen table, the livery,
 harlequins' palms chalked
 white in prayer, the hourglass, perfect

(LIEUT. MURPHY CONTINUED)

and what metal is and what earth and what light and what place and where do you live and where are you and who am I and how is my heart and how is my heart going to do this and what metal is around my heart and what cold is and where is it warm and where are you worn and where are you sore and around your heart is and around your throat you tie a knot and blood won't come out anymore and the air will go down easy and when will the air go down easy and when will missing not mean limbs and where is my limb and where and where and where is the thing I held in my palm and where is my palm I held it with and when will the air and when will the end and when will the beginning go down easy and when will we know what to do with our palms on Sundays we can't press them together anymore and when will we know and when will we know and when will we know to get up and run out on each other and run out on our mothers run out on our fathers rundown and run down father to the spring that lets me be thirsty the raft makes me thirsty the sea makes me thirsty and where is the salt for your neck and where is the car and who will drive and where are we going and do we have enough time I know we will not make it how will we make it and how does it work and what is it and what is inside it and if it's a season and if we fail to show up and if we cannot fail to show up and if it's a metal and where will we sharpen and on what lathe is our neck and how did it fall there and how did this dirt fall there and how did this dirt get into the season and how did the season get into our mouth and when will you leave and when will I follow and when will it stop and when will we stop and when will we stop to pray and where are you taking me and where and where and where are you going and why can't I come and why do I have only one I need a replacement and why is the house left with no one and what does it do empty and what empty is and what is not empty and why is my hand and why will I lose it and how will I leave it and how will I find it and after I'm thirsty and after I'm angry and after I've drowned and after I'm calm and after I've held the metal and before I've killed it and why will I kill it and why we need sun is why we need lamps and why I am cutting your neck is why you can keep my hand pressed over