

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:

BEAD

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In the tradition of poem-as-riddle, *BEAD* might be said to be an exercise in metaphor in which the *tenor* is hidden (from the poet, from the world) and disparate *vehicles* (cathedrals, horns, beads) offered as points of only partial comparison. Solution becomes a poetic act for which the poet (the world) must accurately determine which comparisons are illuminating and which are not. *BEAD* is as perplexed by what a thing is as by what it means, and thus combines the associative movements of poetry with the argumentation of the essay to stage central issues in phenomenology and existentialism. These verse-essays extract language from geometry, sacred space, and Objectivist aesthetics to draw a shape around our experience of the Uncanny.

BEAD

by

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## BEAD

*But I stood upright where I [was], I and my brother... The place was noble where we two stood, the higher in honor... I am unique in the world. My back itself is dark and wonderful. I stand on the wood, at the end of the board. My brother is not here, but brotherless now I must keep my place at the end of the board and firmly stand. I know not where my brother is now or where he dwells on the bosom of earth, who formerly dwelt high by my side. We stood together in making war; neither alone declared his strength... Now strange beings tear into me, injure my insides. I cannot escape. On the tracks he will find success, he who seeks it, ... his soul's profit ...*

EXETER BOOK, 55 (“ANTLER”)

*I'm having a dream: a string on which pearls are strung is snapped (from whose neck had the necklace hung?) and an infinite number of pearls scatter across the floor. Beneath the chairs and under the bed and the closet I gather them up one by one. But how many can I gather? At most a hundred.*

YOEL HOFFMANN

## PROLOGUE

That the world as-is I no longer am confident about—do not trust it nor believe the things about it what once made me me, it it—is all.

There were deer here & they'd eat the vegetables in my landlord's garden & when we put the posts up there were still the rabbits coming in & we put more fence in the posts & the deer stopped eating so I'd see them only across the street standing among the park equipment & just as still until the building company overnight took apart the park, put it on the back of a flatbed truck that drove immediately out of town—I was drunk at a bar & I drove home the boy who had vomited into a urinal; I played for him choral music in my car, songs from my high school friends—& when I got back home that's when it was gone & I saw for that first time how empty a field is.

What happened after—there were no deer I didn't see them, not on either side of the street so I went back home to see my parents, drove fourteen hours south then west into the American Delta to see my mother. She had been attacked the day before & held me in the doorway with all of my bags on the porch—she hardly said a word, was only screaming in her sleep at this point.

My sister then married a minister on New Year's & I came back after a month of holiday to find several inches of snowy ice on the yard & tracks, hoofed ovals, cracked in it. They had come back & I was not there; it was a new world, I am in a new place: this is what happens, how change is signaled.

## CONDITION

*It is all one night, twenty years long.*  
--Clive Wearing

I must have realized my condition when I saw the shot of the man in the snow: he was leaning back—relaxed, somewhat smiling, one hand propped behind his head, the other giving a thumbs up—and wearing nothing but a thin pair of boxer shorts from which his legs stretched out beneath a mound of it as if he'd been buried on a beach by his children.

Those around him—his family, the magazine photographers—were bundled to their necks in fur collars & thick wool, while the soles of his feet (& this was no camera trick) burned simultaneously bright red & purple on the page. The magazine was discussing the inability to feel—here, the result of a lightning strike years earlier. They called the man *lucky*, a *survivor*. Where was this again? Toronto? Or just outside? Not far enough, in either case—three, maybe four Mississippis?

In college this was just a game we would play driving high through Memphis: which one of the senses would we give up—hearing, sight, or touch? The choice at the time was obvious, but how was I supposed to understand the consequence?

I put the magazine away & took off my clothes. A dry summer storm passed over as I did, knocking out the lights, leaving me to shower in the dark. What I found rubbing my body, then, I knew were not mine, but arms of darkness coming out of their snake-holes. I dried off & masturbated until my arm fell asleep, feeling only a mannequin grip as I ejaculated on the towel.

On the dresser, the picture of my father standing with my sister in New York City. He was in a brown suit in front of a theater. He no longer looked like my father. & Suddenly having no father, I sat on the bed all night.



I thought about the man in the snow holding his newborn son in his hands, bathing him in the bathroom sink, how he must have second-guessed the temperature of the water a number of times before starting, & later the pressure of his own fingers as he rubbed shampoo all over the tiny scalp, conditioning his child's down, unable to feel a thing or know what he was doing. I wondered if storms ever woke him in a mid-dream state, with nothing in the room yet possessing its reality save the sound of thunder & the familiar touch of panic; if the lightning always seemed to stand right on the other side of the bedroom window; if in those moments, he could feel his wife's arms come out from beneath the comforter & curl around him, taking him in.

On the next page, the magazine discussed the results of a recent experiment conducted by university scientists in which they, in their lab coats, had watched children crawl across a pane of glass stretched like a coffee table over an image of a gorge. Each time, without variation, the child crawled calmly across the glass as if suspended in air, until halfway through, when he looked down, saw the depths, & stopped; then, paralyzed, cried there, not yet knowing what a gorge was or what it even meant to fall.

BEAD

I, Rudolf Hess, my window a screen,  
& on the screen have appeared many deer,

I see each thing in its three stages:  
liquid, clarity, & magnification.

The mourners have left me one by one  
so that I may be kept alone in my mourning

& my God watches me with keys to the door,  
he & those like him hidden from sight.

In this cathedral I stage my transcendence  
though turtles all down it may perhaps be,  
a deer in every copse. I thumb the bead—

—all in all & is here

May  
    come to Spandau.

Nothing owned weighs much:

bees along the wall, air  
& cave, theirs, hives on screen,

rabbit prints down sight in mud,

kinds or sorts of deer by stream  
(that they are there?).

                            May I throw a stone  
from the screen out to where  
  I'd pick it  
& throw  
                    the distance once more.

Here is where the deer may be  
from me on the path now

following the stream  
                                    opposite

fathoming  
                    & green eye of spring.

To see & try

to see & try to say

to say

*I try to say 'the deer' sincerely*

*try to see*

but that it still may not be there—

& still the water stills;

the deer still; the water stills

the deer—I'm still & trying:

try sincere to still the deer

& water still, to be sincere

to that that's seen, to what may be

may not be there,

there nearly still—

a nearby still of nearby deer,

*say still! you eye of nearby deer*

*still! you eyes of nearby deer—*

sincere the water stills the water still

& I nearby, not there, may be,

may be sincere, may I, may I.

## COSMOGRAPHIA

One was charting the Southern Fish in the stellarscope & the other was crabbing Biscayne Bay in the dark with a flashlight & a scoop-net & the sixth star of the Crane that night burned brightly with the other five fixed at eye-level like a frame above them & above the white-blue crabs that kept rising from below the sand, squaring-off the black hole at the fulcrum of the plane upon which we were circling & going down as couples in a dance marathon on the event horizon: clock-wise.

There was a wooden toll-bridge too, & the ghosts—I could see them, their white bodies on the beach, materials in their hands, cataloging the good things of the world & the good names they had been given, giving a solid look to the divots in the sand where the crabs turned-silver in the silvering night collected like little coins in an offering plate or leapt out into constellations along the celestial equator that dipped below the surface, waxing a quartered underbelly over some hemisphere, & came back hours later, during which time the Crane above remained so resolute that it didn't pivot around or illuminate at all the seven-hundred pound grand piano that had appeared to us, an axis mundi on the sand bar of a piano-sized island in the lagoon.



Charred black with real fire, the remains of a yajna, four strong legs hoisting it up over the dark ash, the symbol was taking part in a series of conditions in which the first is silence, then there is a hand, then the sound of the hand as it strikes itself, & the slope of its gravity—it took first the eye, then the body, & suddenly the ghosts had surrounded it & were taking it in too. The reciprocity before me was not unlike the kula ring where the red-disc necklaces pass to the north & the white-shell armbands pass to the south & thousands of men come from all eighteen islands of the archipelago to step from one canoe to the next in an endless chain of canoes & trade, leaving at the end with items of no use or value beyond the giving itself & the completion of the offering to & from their partners—

& the warmth of the moment made my body a filled-in circle of warmth.

The path the ghosts were taking around the island was a mobius strip & at its focus the black piano, whose hard parameters & curvature made the body orbit twice to complete the viewing: it was a marvel, a find—the ghosts excavating & archiving each artifact contained within as they might have done or might one day do the cliff cities or the towns buried beneath the ash of Vesuvius, each piece of key & the instrument's molted carapace as good as a spoon or tin cylinder in a black room breathing in light.

It was our third night looking from the inn on the bay but the first with any company. Neither of us knew how any of it got there—it all seemed to appear necessarily, as if brought about by our very actions, by virtue of our being there—here—at our particular time & place in all the history of time & place, we addends moving toward this sum teleologically, without choice or variation, resolute with torches in our hands.

It reminded me of a story about a leaky dike & the caretaker who lived in the hut nearby: one night he crossed the beach to plug a hole & walked back home, but as soon as he returned he heard a new leak spring & turned around to cross the beach to plug the hole & he kept this up for the better part of the night, plugging holes & cracks with bark & driftwood, only to find that, in the morning, he could see the pattern of his footprints in the sand & that the pattern was in the shape of a giant crane swooping across the beach.

That night my wife & I both dreamed I was dead, which woke us both suddenly with a hotness in our blood. At the balcony rail she said I was not there: in the bed was a name tag, & my body elsewhere: perhaps in the bog, down in its thick with the Grauballe man—both of us cast in an antiqued silver with bright shoots of red tuft hair, our skin layered in sheets of liquid shine paint, poured into the shape of a man with his throat cut, a hole for the bog swamp to seep in & preserve us in metal on the inside too.

In mine I rose for a piece of roast beef from the skinny refrigerator in my childhood home. I folded it over & ate it from my fingers—it seemed to me the strong rump of a horse. I cut a square of white cheese & placed it in the center of a white saltine & imagined in my stomach a white window with a white sun shining through, the brown horse outside in the grass. He put his head on the sill of the window & I patted his nose, feeding rope sideways into his mouth, getting ready to go.

We rode a ways out to the city cemetery where William Faulkner is buried, & as I got off the horse, I saw the brown hair on his head splitting like a lima casing, a seedling sprout of bright white bone torquing & twisting out of his skull, a skeleton thorn navigating corkscrew & vine-like, taking the shape of an antler until the grim horse himself was no longer a horse but a deer in the grass between Looker and Lovely-Joy, standing so very tall, so much taller than the dead.

I was there too, so infinitely tall—six feet above where the water was coming in at my ankles, through the seams of my shoes, bubbling out through the tops—water from beneath the grass, & beneath the grass beneath the rocks in multitude, & beneath the rocks, water coming from as far down as the world goes ultimately: through the black dirt underneath, through the mantle, the core, the cities buried beneath cities, the tel under tel, the dirt so deep the dead could stand on one another's shoulders & still have the rocks & the grass & the seams of my shoes just out of their reach.

The living are much taller than the dead—we small & daring Chinese acrobats, somersaulting, cartwheeling over the dark audience below, completely unaware of the fall down past our older brothers & male cousins, past our strong-armed mothers & our mothers' sisters, past a chain of big uncles, uncles & fathers, fathers & grandfathers, past our blacksmiths & net-makers, ax-men & quarriers, miners, diggers, delvers, down past the feet & the shoes of the dead, through the water & rock fields, through city & city & city & tel, through cement-top tables & sediment shelves, marble & crust & netting, down, down, we acrobats down through the darkness & past the four columns fixed on the shells of the turtles that hold up the world & swim through the ocean, an ether or space that comes out through our shoe-tops & enters the world & will grab at our ankles & shake us awake when we dream.



—Outside the ghosts & crabs were still there, the nine orders of angels in their three spheres, & the stars above were bioluminescent birds whose green silk & silver wings blinked or stared at us from an opposite wall. I remember thinking again *one day a big wind will come* & becoming aware of how there on the lower boundary beneath the quintessential, the world was slipping its head into the cape behind the camera, my face immediately becoming the photograph of the boy hearing for the first time.

## BEAD

Can you see all three?—  
the pictures on transparent paper.

Before Spandau I was alone  
with my wife. She brought a boat to me

& we sat in the grass until water came.  
Water came & Spandau.

I, Rudolf Hess, a sequence of sounds & letters turned into a serial digit: the cathedral is very large & I count myself lucky when I can fall asleep in it. I don't always dream, but when I do, I am a bead & I feel the string pass through me—or rather, I am passed along it. It helps me to understand, & when I can't, to at least sense what is there, what might be known.

Without materials, I'm on my own to remember the things I've learned before:

Tiny errors in the Latin Vulgate  
have grown horns from the head of Moses.

It is radiant. The deer has seen the face of God

spent a summer living in his house  
sleeping on his floor.

For years the deer were rabbits  
& my symbols had no horns.  
I was thus a man with a screen  
& a totem pole in the yard beyond.

The rabbits but the bottom block,  
a world not yet built on top of them,  
founders of said world that would not  
live to see it, not even from the mountain.

I tried to move from that room to live higher  
above the yard but the vantage point  
revealed my surroundings & made me alone  
in a way I had not been before.

Returning me below I stood  
in the cathedral quiet with no holiday  
& then he appeared in six flights of deer.  
Did you know he was silver?

That night a deer chirped, not itself  
but the thing so small I could not see it  
that was on top of it near it or inside it  
& how long had it been there?—

but why would I not say a deer chirped  
when it was the only thing in the landscape?

## EXPLANATION OF THE PROOF

I was in the window as the polydiagonal when the deer came to me from out of the park & bent down to eat the leaves of the vegetation in the yard. When I reached to touch the spots it caught my arm in its teeth & began to grind at the wrist until the entire hand fell into its mouth & was swallowed. A peristalsis, the antlers grew from its skull in the shape of fingers—there they were, born again: origin of the one hand.

The city was evacuating from a storm that had not yet come—I'll say there was a manhole in the center of town that everyone agreed upon as its target. The disaster each man accepted in his heart was a direct function of his proximity to the focus of what was then still thought of as a perfect circle. Aerially the view was identical in structure & spacing to that of a cube dropped vertically into the circle of a lip, the equidistant sloshing-out: so the people were leaving their space.



Due to the slightly elliptical nature of the imperfect event there was in fact a second focus at the cathedral in which my wife & I were building our death room. All day we had moved furniture into & out of the rented truck until we surely amounted all that we had ever together or independently possessed into a singular place we were deciding to occupy. The room was in piles when we put down our bodies to the bed as obediently as we might've known how, & from the perfect trajectory the weather moved across our eyes so such to be watched for an audience. Our atoms vibrated, quantumly entangled with the beads at the other focus: it felt more truly a cradle than our mothers had been able to mimic, than we could replicate twice removed.

A peace because for once we were not making the decision. The day was an explanation of the proof.

Numbers several lifetimes large & the sheer pressure of their gravity—my body would overheat in the bed beneath the vent, moving me into this separate container but only so when I slept. Never more truly terrified & I'm saying this years later when even the thought of the sequence beginning again reduces me to my palpitations.

I've explained it further as the only time I've ever left my body's position on the axis to become a point in a fourth matrix—if I've ever breathed the noumena, it was the hotness of my own breath inside the bed sheet material compounding over on itself in a wrought spiral, cog tooth of my body meeting cog tooth of the material with the space between eliminated via my addition to the sum, the large numerator of the lifetime coefficient, so large it accumulated a mass & pulled the flecks of mass from other matter, feeding itself & somehow I was whole within it though not separate from.

Though I could not state for certain what exactly prompted the dream, I've grown comfortable describing it as a circuit through which I was run simultaneous with a second energy. It was a transcending that required me to step through the door of the closet I had seen moving in, & I felt the energy of the room was what one breathes in a sauna. I was not yet the sauna then, merely the container of its steam—to become, I needed only to go limp & fall into the current between the cathedral walls, then the cumbersome body is eliminated, allowing the materials to go great guns—& in writing this I suddenly realize what the professor meant when he said there is nothing new in the world but the form.

*R.B.*

## BEAD

—Speculation respecting truth is partly difficult & partly easy: a proof of the following, that, in the pursuit of truth, neither is any one philosopher in a way worthy of the dignity of the subject, able to attain this, nor can all investigators fail in reaching it, but that each says something to the point concerning Nature: & individually that, indeed, they add nothing or but little to this speculation respecting truth but from all these collected together that there ensues something of magnitude. Wherefore if indeed it so seems to be the case, as we happen to say in the proverb, Who will miss the door? in this way truly would the speculation of truth be easy.

Many instances human nature is servile so that according to for to all speculators doth the Deity appear as all men commence their inquiries from wonder whether a thing be so: evil the evil.

We were born with bald heads  
but should not desire to go out as we came:

I have watched great men portrayed with gold circles behind them

but only once was I seen by the deer in such a way  
as to make of me such a remembered thing as to know

I existed only in his mind as the seen thing

& that I could do no more or better  
than to sing my way from his head back into the world

as a bent & constantly disrupted regeared bone-tipped antler.

When it ends it will be a chandelier of milk preserved so momentarily as to cement its atoms into a fixed shape for once: even your fingers will not shatter them at that time.

& Hast thou considered the polygon & the polydiagonal: hast thou abbreviated thine self & made of thine heart a bead within which the string shall join your hunger to the world's hunger, your evil to its evil.



As good a song as we have seen written about: & only now has it been deemed appropriate that the song should take its physical shape as the ghost once became the dove & sat on the shoulder of the only just baptized man: so now as it was before, & thusly fulfilling what long felt impossible & truly was impossible but only so because it was then & not now when such things are not simply possible because they are in fact inevitable.

To whom could I even show it:

## ITS EVENTUAL EAR

My uncertainty grew because I was not turning my face to the breath, too much a Samuel before the priest—I said I am here & what I heard to the wrong people, the failed priest; three times before it was made known to me that I would need to turn my face to the swell to in turn receive my blessing.

The hand took hold of the one hand clapping & in that service no longer mistook the call—the hand was redeemed, made new in his habitat, the in-between of the finger & thumb brought into the other in-between.

This would soon mean that all to whom I had previously turned & mistakenly attributed as the string were to in their duty fall from their respective windows out of the cathedral down to their necks. It is a kind of murder, a kind for which I am responsible but not guilty. As the zodiac turns & the baton, who am I but the inevitable conclusion of this conclusion, the sum to which the addends sum, the sound of the just passed event carrying to its eventual ear.

I cannot apologize—it isn't in my nature. But I thank the old priesthood, my old God & the mentors, my mother's coat (the one she made for me), the first love, the first loved book, the phrasings bold & uttered bronzed, for ringing true being less than so, for why should I fault the beginnings for lack of endurance. It was not a choice.

My uncertainty grew until I turned my face around the breath— then the new uncertainty began; I was reading the sentence of the world & each noun was becoming proper & each proper noun bracketed. The philosophy teacher said it would have to start with Husserl, & though I'm starting to suspect that perhaps this is not the trajectory of his ballistic, I have learned the speed & angle that the wind blows in & this surely enough is.

Bracketed, that is to say whether the bead exists in fact or not is irrespective of its presence to me. The sound that woke me three times in the night had no discernible source when I searched my room save my own presence as the wakened.



## BEAD

He said, What can I do for you that no other thing can do for you?  
What am I to you, what do I do that makes me what I am & what I  
am to you?

He said, What can I do that the bead cannot do, that the string  
cannot do? What does my form do with your thinking, & what can  
you do with this form that you otherwise would not be able to do?  
Why must you lean on the crutch, what injury have you suffered,  
what disease has come upon you? What is around this, about this?  
What is what is around this about?

& Finally, what will you do for me that no other.

I'll grant the bead good for one thing & one thing only: to illustrate in simple geometry the shape of what it is to be given a thing, a vision, & what it becomes when you sound the sound of that one hand clapping.

It's not enough anymore to viscerally describe the everyday: it has yielded to the Sabbath. No more plot points but ley lines.

I thumb the bead—

& bead a thumb to remember now  
the lighting of lamps &, after, moths

&, brought to the world, thus & how  
I was fully formed, once fully soft

light too. The world it turned the me  
of visage shown as black in water

to that with silver in its teeth,  
assigned to me a tempered mother

of which the eyes & fever dreams  
became me now, becomes a night

of eyeshine moths, about which might  
a lamping be that somehow seems

to make of me a bead for being  
the the thing seen by the the that's seeing.

## BRANCUSI'S TORSO OF A YOUNG MAN

Everyone lives at home with their parents except for Alex who has gone to college. The ice he buys for the party from the store (& never makes) is denoted a kind of plastic wrapped in plastic.

The tallest of my friends, I am (I think) an axis mundi. Like the Torso a vector & everyone else circles me as contestants in a dance marathon go down clockwise.

Being good exhausts me (the way I too put on the communal deodorant in a ruse to convince the one who needed it to do so). Certainly a fuzziness can be said to exist at the perimeter, & a dent.

Forty-two days without a fire fatality—so says a sign on the corner of Union & Evergreen, but Kate Garner did swallow forty-two beads after the last party to try to be reborn as a flower but the body resists reincarnation & vomits the beads back up into a kind of rosary that she thumbs to remember after the fact.

There, I watch through the blinds, a girlfriend become manifold  
with a quarterback on the hood of a new car: the machine in the  
garden in the machine.

The majesty of this town's pure setting, like a jar—should one place himself (particularly we non-believing) in the middle of the state, the wildness will rise to him & make of him a focus. When the people grow suspicious they call him a false pillar & displace him—therefore necessarily he reconstitutes himself in the pure setting.

He has to replace his God with something as magical—but not even: it must be more so as not to tempt him to return. He must find that that exists on the planet & he must love the earth as the sacred space that that inhabits. He must borrow a term to call his home Eden & navigate the ley line & mundi. The profane must yield to the Sabbath—& even here when I say must, it seems as if there is a choice; there is no must or choice—only has, it is descriptive rather than proscriptive.



Not in green but grey retreat does the night trip the light fantastick  
toe.

A new masculinity. He loves the home he hates & the people who have banished him & he tonight loves his new home most of all. A lone set of well-defined & distinct objects in the cove—the car is parked, semantically described by the intensional definition:

--*A* is being good exhausts us (when Leah straddles my hips & pivots coaxially around on my thigh—I can specify where the pants become wet—& my hands never leave her back).

--*B* is I join the fast food napkin & fold it into an origami flower with a straw for the stem. Sometimes I plant the flower in a neighbor's garden when I don't suspend it in the window on the drive home until it is taken by a magnet to the side of the road.

Will the deer eat my semen (I think)? Will I then be truly born again in the guts of the thing, beget with horns—the subtracted Moses? Is this my finite-dimensional salvation?

Thus & how I wonder if a principled policeman might not examine the flower's DNA & just to prove a point find its origins from the golden empty set.

## BEAD

On the fourteen thirty: moving my arm around her shoulder as in a get, got why was there & in the moment for the first time in my life without anyone there telling me how to do so, reposed her gentle, gentle even with the lever. The boat had opened its angle, was a horizontal plane with another plane on top of another slightly smaller plane facing it & all three of us were a band of three planes, a braided circuit, the current ran through it all. In my body was a fog & a water—all those years in a bright incredible something—what was it, & as it was over we two again in a half turn repose reclined & the small quadrilateral cut in the roof of the sky showed where the moon was in the constellations that night all that time ago directly eclipsed by the street lamp. Time will pass & in a bed no longer a boy with the small gulf between the window ledge & the blackout screen forms a very well-lit iridescent quadrangle ninety degrees rotated around a pivot, a vertical pillar of small light that represents the large gulf in the question.

I see how the light has changed but my repose is similar & beyond these two things has the rest stayed more the same or not—that is to say does the delta go in parenthesis or adjacent to them in the order of operations.

Things are done down here today, more alone than they've ever been before. I think about dying & want to say there's no difference to tell between now & then, the life flashing before your eyes, it all seems so fast anyways.

The deer come out of the mountains, they come down from the mountain, they come up from the ocean in a pillar & shake the seaweed from their antlers. They walk in droves in long lines up from the canyons weaving as ants might but larger & with their horns they come up from the canyon as soldiers might but larger & they coat the whole.

They come out of the ant holes, the deer they soldier the canyon with fire in their antlers, antlers the mountains, & in the droves the seaweed shakes the ocean out of the salt, the salt a coat for the horns. The long lines, the sound of horns larger, weaving a coat of deer that might walk less than shake the mountains down to canyon down.

Come the rock footed deer endlessly walking, the whole canyon coated in a black mountain of seaweed, the horns lined up larger than ant droves high as a single antler coming down with a pillar of fire, pillar of salt, the long large & the large long. Sound might but larger down from the deer, the mountain come out of the deer, the canyon do come out as the deer & with the deer the fire shakes the salt from the coat with the weaving sound, the larger line, the endless come, the single might.

For an origin story might I say the deer came first millennia ago when the bones of a prophet were fossilized by the ocean sediment water making the bones broken with a curvature to them from the pull & then the animal himself a little later, the mud off the earth inextricably bound by time & earth to its fossilized forbear—so attached to our past we wear it like an ornament in our hair, a wreath another would say, the whole chandelier instead & even the ball beneath it.

## BIG BALL

On top of a big ball when she said about her project, "I'm trying to give it a name; sadly 'The Father' is taken," I heard it in its new form, newly punctuated, recapitalized, newly arranged, & re-appropriated.



On top of a big ball—I'm trying to give it a name—"Sadly the father is taken," sadly he goes from us, sadly afraid. Big Tex—my father in the window, a man in a passenger seat of a car—what does he know about the fire that burns the balloon of us & has he ignored the steel rings that form the body on top of the big ball? Big Tex, you of the fifty feet, you icon of the State Fair & all the rest, with the celestial geometry inside of you that the electrical fire in your jaw only reveals for the first time to those of us in cars, with cameras, what does he know of us—

The brim of his hat was your hat in concentric fires & the bucket a metal smoke. He wore it, Big Tex, like a dirge.

On top of a big ball—my mother's feet slipping, the heel in chase with the toe down the front of the ball—is that an image of my mother mid-attack, the feet moving but the body—the body! the subject (the object)—won't follow out of the mud. The ground betrays her, the earth forsakes her momentarily. No traction, no touching the ground, dangles. How long can she stay on top of the big ball: so much action for no movement. Can she not fall—

My student asks me about Stevens, says what is nothing that is not there & the nothing that is—I say look at this chair: the girl who just went to the bathroom is not in this chair but we see that it is more empty than it would be if she had not come to class at all—the presence of her absence is in that chair & that absence is the nothing, not nothing. But what of my mother's chair, at her office job, when she is there but could have not been, could have been the nothing that is there, but instead is a third something that is only like the nothing that is there. Why did he have to go before thinking toward that next step, into what lies right beyond that edge shagged with ice; why does the world among worse things take some of us outside—

The bear in a tree, Michael Bear on a big ball high above the crowd, a drowsy bear to teeter totter a few inches forward on the branch. The trampoline begins where the toenail ends & then a few inches back on the branch, back on top of the big ball. A dance, running the log in the mid-air—this ready-made water mill of a living thing, it brings up what was down unseen: a dropped pair of sunglasses, a glass bottle of Coke. Sends back down too the leaves in the fur, the downward look, the needle in the neck, must converge.

## BEAD

Bead the first language I learned to put toward  
what it is what felt like it came beyond me:

& when the word no longer matched it one to one  
or even closely I had no choice

but to lean on it: a crutch less than a rail

to bend over to heave & purge myself wrench  
it all up again: here was coming out of me

from me was of me what was in me & how long  
had it been there what irreparable damage

had I caused my lungs  
my liver: as if over a toilet a balcony the speed at which

it fell along the vertical from the screen

so I've read that a bead falls fast as a boulder  
but they do not hit at the same

could not because I am certainly hearing two sounds

with one clearly leading the other  
there—the two waves at which I now can discern

not just the Heavens  
to be the Bell but the bits that borrowed Their language too:

a secular world that did not take to  
the one sound that is connate more connate than Bells

the reason for the Bell even: the compulsive sound even.