

Lynne Knight

THE UNLIMITED MOOD

for Forrest Hamer

Sleepless late one night I examined the infinitive:
to place. What would be the agent?
Hands, memory: I tried to place him.
After a while, I remembered.
He was the one in love with bones.
In love with water over bones that had been thrown
from ships like scraps from meals,
like slops, like next to nothing
though he knew the record of that suffering
would make its way along the seafloor
to the coast, ooze up through heavy sand,
flood through reed and marsh grass,
spread through earth, disturb the foot of someone walking—
not stones but a calling, heaved against the insole—
until he lay his whole length down on sunwarmed grass,
pressing his good ear to cries and moans
blue at their center, blue in their nimbus,
blue as the water they had sunk through.
He would lie listening to these blues
and know to place their origin
in salty waters rising from the heart,
ancestral tears he would not know
what to do with until he thought to sing,
and, singing, heard the dead
instruct him where to place his grief: *Here*.
Where sorrows wash across your face
and disappear.