

The Language of Starvation / Paul Nelson

Huddled on our stools, we carve
at blankness, to make meat
hang or dance, hold itself from falling.
We smear and chew, smoke and erase
looking through the young Calcutta bones
hooked before us on the rafter,
his teeth still growing in the air.
He lets his arms swing down
on their metal clips and springs,
one palm back, the other forward
as for alms.

The ulna parallels the radius
on this side, crosses on the other.
We see the backside by recollection,
like fear when it isn't there,
hunger when we do not feel it.
We imagine the flesh we sit on,
our organs clutched like birds
in a covered cage, the asp
peeking through the girdle. Today
we want a live model; we want our mothers,
and can't imagine from this armature
anything we may have eaten.

Binge / Paul Nelson

Men in felt hats
slough along the river flats
where someone said you flashed beneath the bridge.
Or were you simply smiling?

They find you; you are being blind,
staring down again. They grab your coat,
turn you to the door, the sun,