

## IN ADMIRATION OF BATS

BY TIM DEJONG

At night we are the outlines of objects  
in the shadow world of bats.  
They carve the dark in untraceable shapes.

All through the long summer we are  
occasional witnesses of their flights:  
they'll careen toward us and away,

diving on stick-fingered wings  
in the dusk on a wind like a breath  
half-exhaled as if with the drowsy

certainty of more nights like this one.  
They spun along the fingers of the breeze  
before we ever noticed them: to see

them is to realize how often we haven't.  
Nor can we know, as Nagel observed,  
what it's like for a bat to be a bat:

even to imagine such a consciousness  
is beyond human reach. Bats echolocate  
through ultrasound, intuit the refractions

of their high-pitched shrieks:  
all senses foreign to our own.  
You light the melted candles,

and we sit where evening broaches  
the patio. You're saying something  
about how you still believe

we are less verb than noun.  
Soon we'll sleep. Meanwhile  
the bats will weave in vast

concatenations, diving down,  
sure-winged navigators, if half-blind,  
of the semi-urban half-dark,

the catacombed shopping plaza skyline.  
By instinct they embrace the lens on time  
and space granted to them, a kind

of marriage of action to capacity  
purer than our nurtured will  
to trust too little what we see, or else

by turns to trust too easily, learning by  
fitful steps to say more than  
that we lived, and then did not.

The challenge: to become ourselves,  
by dint of mistake and will and prayer,  
although that becoming might require

seeing the blurred designs besides  
whatever spaces nothing hides behind –  
the slow unfolding pattern of what is,

veiled by the mode of our seeing, buoyed  
by the renegade hope that to know  
we are found resurrects what we find.

## BORDER CROSSING

BY TIM DEJONG

Earlier today the whole world blinded  
them in azure, scarred rocks diamond-bright,  
swept horizon shimmering heat.

Now the moon tracks their steps from the wide  
sky above their heads, faint shadows  
of the cacti in sliding stripes along the cold sand.

They've set out north from the last camp,  
voices at a murmur in the milky chill,  
nomads traversing what's nearly no man's land.

They cross a highway into the hollowpoint stare  
of a coyote that turns and pads noiselessly away.  
Hour by hour the hidden sun scrapes at the world's edges.

Tomorrow sifts upward and worries their steps.  
The sentinel moon glows and wanes,  
and when the sudden engines cough and flare

they huddle frightened beneath shouts  
and stares without time even to guess  
what migrant corner of the land past their gaze

might someday have been theirs.  
A floodlight pins them back into themselves,  
bright reminder of the divide between yours and ours,

renders their thin arms against the unyielding  
back of the flatbed truck so many white  
flags raised between scrubgrass and stars.