

## BILL STOBB

### Nervous Systems

Invisible but dense  
like a sky full of dusty textbooks  
dark matter came sweeping along  
after our brilliant spheres. So,  
sparks remind us of love: deep quiet  
interrupted by vision.

Sparks shower down  
from an industrial chimney  
tonight walking near the distillery.  
I think of love.  
Peering up into near black  
I think I see the perching welder.  
I picture him  
every night  
walking up his driveway:  
he wants to despise  
what he sees in the yellow kitchen light  
—appliance, appliance, woman, child.  
He wants to stay outside  
but it's no use.  
He puts his foot on the step and thinks of love.

When I think of violating myself  
I go walking late at night:  
there's a sweet lemon coating  
on every city block. Objects  
look weird in the sulfuric lights  
and they are weird. Once  
the only time in my life  
I sensed my own size  
in a deep way:  
I was standing next to a pile of bananas  
in a fluorescent lowa convenience store.  
My reflection  
in the window behind the register  
looked like a large man standing  
on the sun. A thousand bananas  
and me right with them.

Suicides are said to be damned  
and it must be  
not so much for their disdain as survivor fear.  
If the spirit returns  
pale and luminous, dark  
lines drawn into what had once been called its skin  
trembling will inhabit us.  
From the reels of our lives  
nothing counters  
that black version blanking the self.

Graphic design on a café door:  
preppy girl's coffee swirls.  
Gazing across a table at a swirly-eyed boy  
she conducts fluid substances and he  
conducts. Their convection:  
the sweet idea that worlds  
launch in perhaps slightly over  
-caffeinated swoons. The door  
swings open. Snow  
spirals in and dust.

### **Other greens. Reductions.**

"The bulk of distances, the mounds of home."  
Lyn Hejinian, "The Green"

Starting when I am young, concern for the family yard  
in summer: thinning, burning  
out to its reedy margin. Concern against yellow  
breeds these disjointed... what. What?  
Every morning it's there, the yard, for tending  
and inside, at arm's length  
a sense that Dad's in the garage, smoking, dissatisfied.

I put on a green apron. A green bow tie.  
I serve omelets to the grieving  
at the Perkins across from the hospital.  
I hope to feel irrelevant.  
Careful with decafs and whole wheats.  
Careful to be efficient and kind  
but in no way involved in a meal.

On the west side, I sell pool tables  
and there I love green  
lain over slate—rooms  
centered by a well-lit emerald.  
Step out to smoke and examine  
a sunburned fringe of foothills  
dying to spark in dry heat.