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In Bosch's World

Dennis Schmitz

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In Bosch's World · *Dennis Schmitz*

too we are an odd detail—
a man & wife riding a fish
into the sky, too incidental to be

St. Anthony's temptation to carnal knowledge.
we refuse to look at each other
or at the scenes that encourage us

to suicide, ignore the street boys
beating a dead man's face,
the sum of carnal knowledge.

here men can have the faces of turtles
with the accuracy of hard practice.
all work on the body piecemeal:

one man develops the hand,
or accomplishes only *adductor pollicis*.
each man is still only a piece of man,

this is the village, the first Chicago.
in such gestures as allegory permits,
guile is one-handed, but self-disgust

has cut off both its hands.
what made cities, civility, not even
kindness, is broken to fingerbones,

to nail parings a later man will realign
with tweezers, & with regret at the waste,
make a handshake from the bones of two bodies.

we are leaving whatever way we can.
below, Anthony can go on kneeling
to his own demons, unable to cajole Jesus,

to make him fly. he may want to be elsewhere,
he may want to ride the pony who rubbed
his saddle off on the bare wood

behind the picture; not to be hero
or saint, to dream humble dreams
lit by the spit-sequins glazing

the pony's muzzle as he labors to be.
in this Hell vermilion masks the suicide's
face & habitual ochre the hero's backside—

the kind of hell we too could have made up
separately.