

J. SCOTT BROWNLEE
Requiem for Used Ignition Cap

Give God no dead
with their brains
busted out, no black
shotguns beside them

empty. Not the boy's suicide
explained as accident,
not his grief manifold
in his family's tongues

taken out of their mouths
by the power of
all that pain unloading.
The body quits.

The spirit does. No one knows
what to say except, faintly,
There, there. Let what joins us
not be lamentation only.

Every tether we tie to that
shotgun blast renders us
split open. We see
the evidence of it

& cannot be blameless:
casing intricate, green
on the boy's bedroom floor
& as memorable now

as the souvenir kept
from some scenic island,
smooth shell thick with buck-
shot meant to penetrate

flesh of an animal
or a dangerous man.
Not a child, Lord, no,
we say, prophesying.

Give us today
 no miracle of rain
to fill our emptiness
 except him, Lord,

that shattered boy,
 back in our fold
still praying earnestly for rain
 as we do, with his head

buried deep in his hands—
 or raised to the sky
as the water strikes him: slick
 mouth open, drinking.