

**The Bat**

A machete is an extension of your arm,  
*not* your grip. In this,

cutting resembles tennis—  
forehand with a topspin slice—

into the messy tops of ragweed that clutter the locust posts.

I'm good at it, the way some are natural at surfing,  
or smiling in the face of incomprehension.

Fifteen—love; thirty—love.

I behead my way around the field we hayed last month.  
The cows notice me but do not react.

Swinging and chopping,  
there isn't any measure to consider how anyone can be hurt.

On the west slope I bury dead horses:  
Tommy Starfish, Charred Angel, Nothing Easy—  
my cemetery of punk bandmates.

Like John Lucas and Ashe, I learned to play on clay,  
rolling out the dew each morning.

I was known for a devastating second serve after the shock  
of an unpredictable first one.

A few friendly bounces, a toss in the air,  
and it might sail to the river or smack an opponent between his eyes.

Once, finding me with a machete, my love asked  
*Who's winning?*

And I didn't have any answer except a quiet assent  
at the semi-horrifying nature of mixed doubles.

She'd lately been tending a juvenile bat rescued  
from the bank barn. Its ear was bent. It wasn't moving around much.

*You worried?* I asked. *I'm worried,* she said.