

# Two Poems

Brock Jones

## Theory

1.

Trigger, firing pin, primer,  
chamber, throat, lands and grooves  
bore, crown, sunlight,  
flesh. Plenty of play here  
and all of it free.

2.

He didn't know how to die  
no battle drill to build the muscle  
memory, so he simply lay in the road.

He'd pictured himself  
always cursing tragically  
funny in those final moments  
before slipping dramatically  
from the saddle of his galloping horse.

He lay beside the truck tire,  
monologue of this his critical scene

bubbling out a hole in his neck  
no writhing no hand over a bullet  
wound no sunset to wash  
the whole scene in gold.

3.

Some days clearly point  
toward a center:

Dead men stacked  
in an ambulance  
their feet—purple-thick  
from no working heart  
to counter the constant  
downward pull of blood—  
stop the doors from closing.

4.

What, in the gathering of mangy puppies  
into an empty sand bag  
to beat against a wall,  
will we want to reproduce?

5.

Even if it were possible to think  
the word *bullet* with the copper-jacketed lead  
zipping through your skull's  
emptying hull, the thought  
and the spinning mushroomed mass  
would always part ways in the end,  
one down a flickering circuit  
fading, the other out bone and hair.

6.

Sometimes the dead sit  
upright in bucket seats  
gaze fixed where the road  
disappears in rippling sunlight  
reflected with that limp  
-jawed baring of teeth.

7.

Tonight the Milky Way  
might be a ladder he could  
climb to Colorado.

Tomorrow, another day  
in a long chain of days exhausted  
in the gunner's hatch holding  
himself upright with machine gun  
handles chewing the grit of Iraq  
sweat darkening camouflage  
around the bottom edge of his body  
armor.

In two weeks a sliver  
of metal thick as a finger  
juts from his jaw line  
blood stoppered behind the shrapnel  
plug skin at the metal's edge  
blue like a fish's belly  
against the gleam of a gutting blade.

Next summer he'll bury  
the metal behind his lover's home  
only to dig it up again later  
that same night like one who knows  
what it is to thirst and so slurps  
night with both hands dripping.

## Improvisation

Crude sutures closing the boy  
around the homemade bomb

Whoever leaves the boy  
on the roadside  
must first roll him from  
a moving car to avoid stopping  
in view of U.S. checkpoints

When the boy  
explodes the father  
dies reaching  
for his already dead son

Mother and father pray for their boy  
on Friday and by Sunday morning  
dogs nose the blast radius  
licking flesh from the road  
Shop owners sweep glass  
and pick the father's guts  
from shredded store fronts

They who fill the boy  
with explosive  
must empty him first  
and dispose of his tiny body's  
viscera and blood

Shrouded fragments of a boy  
and his father placed in graves  
made to face Mecca somehow  
without form or faces  
Begin the three days of mourning

Bending the stiffened limbs of the boy  
back into his clothes to hide  
the cellphone and wires

Whoever kills the boy  
must first steal the boy  
from a father and a mother

**Brock Jones** is an assistant professor of English at Utah Valley University and the author of *Cenotaph* (University of Arkansas Press, 2016), a finalist in the 2016 Miller Williams Poetry Prize. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in the *The Baltimore Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Ninth Letter online*, *Poetry Daily*, *Raleigh Review*, *Sugar House Review*, and others. He's a veteran of the U.S. Army and served three tours of duty in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. He lives with his wife and daughter in Utah.