

To His Soul, and: The Fencing Shoe, and: The
Turin Horse, and: Elemental.

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To His Soul, and: The Fencing Shoe, and: The Turin Horse, and: Elemental

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**To His Soul, and: The Fencing Shoe, and: The
Turin Horse, and: Elemental**

Amit Majmudar (bio)

Soul,
You too are just another locust,
Only lonely in the swarm,
Soul,
You pagan clinging to this body,
Your rabbit's foot, your charm
Against the death that pricks
Your ears up in alarm,
Soul,
You firecracker hidden in a midden,
You prize that is in every box,
Soul,
You web designer, working from home
In nothing but your socks
And in that home so scared you spend
Your whole life checking locks,
Soul,
You self-proclaimed sequoia felled
With just a couple thwocks,
Soul,
You too are just one more deserter,
Haggard, eager to disarm,
Hoping these Americans
Don't mean to do you harm **[End Page 38]**

The Fencing Shoe

Really, with him so young, the kids so young—
his mother (who had never liked his choice)
was waiting out the fall before she asked him.
She had some candidates in mind. So did
the ladies at her book club. They would wait.
But he'd already thought it through that morning
six weeks past the wake when he awoke

alive and hard the first time in forever
and lay there motionless for half an hour
remembering Sir Richard Francis Burton's
favorite fencing shoe, the one he carried
across five continents and Iceland, begging
the cobblers everywhere he traveled
(and Burton traveled *everywhere*) to make
a mate for, since he'd lost the first one back
in Guzerat, when he was twenty-two.
He really loved those fencing shoes, the way
the lost one used to hug his leading foot.
The cobbler in Trieste, who could have used
the money, crossed himself and shook his head.
As far off as Harar and Buenos Aires,
in villages a shoelace wide, in *Iceland*,
even, the superstition held: No cobbler
would dare restore the pair. In fact, the word
they used, when pointing at the shoe he showed them,
astonished him, the same in Portuguese,
Amharic, Hindi, Scots, the whisper falling
like fresh snow in Icelandic: *widower*. **[End Page 39]**

The Turin Horse

When it happened
(we knew for months that it would happen)
I felt, and this is going to seem, I know,
a super-highbrow reference, but I felt
like Nietzsche syphilitic in Turin.
Like I'd just finished up badmouthing
Wagner and Christ and slaves and nice people
and now, while wandering all disheveled
daydreaming dithyrambs and treponemes,
I saw the whipping of the Turin horse.
Somehow the horse was everyone I saw,

and while I didn't throw my arms around them
I stumbled onward, everywhere about to.
I wanted to explain that, yes, my dad
just died, and with him all my high
philosophy. I wasn't up on Sils
Maria anymore. I knew that they
had lost somebody too
they wouldn't talk about, they never talked
about. You do not have to put
a brave face on around me, friends. I'm not
an intellectual anymore. I know the heart,
that brown horse, won't move on
no matter how time whips it. I know
your dead and mine are stubborn horses
and we will throw our arms around them
sobbing with love not at all universal,
what though we tumble through the imago,
our arms enclosing only
the dust motes in a sunlit window floating
in the house where I grew up the day I have to sell it.
My friends, I was the sole albino pigeon
strutting cooing on the cobblestones
while all of you had bruise-gray feathers
pretending bruised was how you were born.
I'm broken now, like Nietzsche in Turin,
where death is whipping, whipping, whipping
my father stubborn on the cobblestones, **[End Page 40]**

a leather strap between his teeth, his fetlocks
bloody and his round eye darting.

I will not leave I will not leave my boy.

You had this sadness in you all along,
but I believed you frivolous, unphilosophical.

Forgive me, all you secret mourners,
citizens of Turin, believers in the shroud.

I'm broken, and I need you all to teach me
how not to twitch and rave beneath a shawl
in an asylum for...

AMIT MAJMUDAR

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