

**ON A 62**

A special padded bus  
    this one  
and it's a wounded day to ride. Our ratio  
of injury to those afraid of how the trip will go  
is neither high nor wide.  
    Pretty much it's all and each of us.

Sirens axe aside the sheet of vehicles  
loud the way police can need to be.  
She in the seat across  
    says *Uh oh!*  
*What happened? City of clowns.*  
*Clown city. Uh oh! What happened?*  
    and stands half up to see.

Prior she had been a quiet client  
with her plastic box of lettuce  
and now is side to side  
    like a whiskbroom to get a clearer view.  
*City of clowns. Clown city.* Her voice sits down on us  
as accurate as dust because  
    a young man's cuffed and on the sidewalk.

Four cops and someone's friends and  
some strangers along the block have on  
    faces so meticulously sad  
        you have to laugh. They  
work their separate businesses  
with a frantic perfect calm  
like none of them will ever speak to anyone again.

"Emerald Greens USA" is what  
the label on her lettuce reads. Emerald  
is too hard a word for what she has.  
    Those are tender greens with lots of edge.  
As is she.  
    As are we all.  
And edge is where our spoilage sets up camp.

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We have good seats and  
will only semi give them up.  
She rose but not to standing and sat back down.  
We're settled and we move again.  
There is some health in us still.

## BIG GAME

A big game this afternoon  
so the city gets a military fly-over

Nothing says college sports  
louder than a bomber low and overheard

It's always good  
to show a show of force

The crowd erupts you know they will  
they've paid good money to

We're so much happier to see ourselves  
than others are to see us

Hopscotch chalked on the sidewalk  
try to guess which rocks were markers

## THIS I BELIEVE

In this quiet world there is  
a derelict sailboat roped to a buoy:  
    a wobbly grin,  
    a smirk out on the surface of the bay.  
And mountains like scones in a bright blue kitchen.

From that slack vessel, if you are me, if you are  
    standing on this beach in this city park,  
the maestro of a wooden thought or two  
rows a smaller boat  
methodically towards you.

I say that's who he is because  
the animals I've come to know  
who live on unmoored boats are  
uniformly tinder,  
    are ready to explode.

When he makes shore  
he makes his dinghy leave a scarring sound,  
    dragged up beach to where  
it's shoved in scrub above high-water mark.  
He's here to walk to town to get  
a box of things you need to live  
if you are him  
    aboard a listing craft all night and day.

Alone aboard that craft except  
    he has beliefs for company, the ones  
    you'd go to shore to feed.  
When his gravel steps have left the ear  
we hear again the soothing song the pebbles say  
as waves go social through them.

## TRUANT

A crickety sack blown west by a car  
east by a truck—

it's my some luck  
to be  
looking at it  
from under a big old emotion.

Man on a bike decides he's for  
investigating and when  
it blows to the curb  
he kicks it twice.

Empty both times!

Sadness has nothing in this world to attach itself to  
that's special.

Still it  
comes about  
as everybody's business.

## ON A 44

She was having trouble picking out  
the bus to get  
to get her to 23rd and John  
Our dear driver didn't know where that was

The bus half full and fully disinterested  
as was the afternoon itself  
A yawning afternoon if ever there was one

You want a 43 I told her You want  
a 43 It will take you right  
there  
But I don't want  
to get off the bus in the University District if  
I get off the bus in the University District  
I'll never get home  
I'm mentally difficult and that place  
is wrong for me to be

Probably we were pretty much the same age  
she and I were probably

My stop I said is the stop you want  
I can't get off in the University District Tell you  
what get off the second stop my stop  
it's a calmer stop don't  
get off this one as we pulled alongside a guy spreading  
contents of a sack on the sidewalk either  
to sell or look it over

At our stop she and I stood and chatted  
Three boys she said she understands  
men more than women  
There were times she wanted to do things illegal things  
but the boys got married and have  
children so it's okay

A 43 I reminded her before I got on  
a 49 for the area where  
the riots were preparing to celebrate May 1

## THE GIANT PACIFIC

Art, it's thought, has heart. Dear art, it's shy.

It is, I hear, the octopus, shy and here along the waterfront.  
Below the pier, perhaps, where people queue to buy fried fish.  
Tossing chips to gulls is entertaining.

It is the largest anywhere, the octopus. Still we, leaning on a railing,  
won't see it from on the pier or on the ferry or out in a plane.  
We won't we won't.

Don't see art even when  
we're leaning over it. It's shy and underneath the surface.

When looked at the water seems to be  
a kind of breathing skin. Or a kind of sky you reach down into  
uncertain what might be there.  
Will you find a thing to take from it or will  
something there take you.

Shy and who's to blame it. Its babies are offered  
on trays with aioli. A special softened crunch.

Poor art.

And yes the octopus  
has three hearts which are  
simply organs unless perhaps they're more than that.

Like you might think the water is  
a kind of skin or sky to reach into.

You'll never know before you do.

## J.W. MARSHALL

**J.W. Marshall** opened Open Books, a poetry-only bookstore in Seattle, in 1995. He sold the store to long-time customer and poet Billie Swift in 2016 and is very pleased that it carries on. His poetry collection, *Meaning a Cloud*, won the Field Poetry Prize and was published by Oberlin College Press. Most recently he has had poetry published in *Hubbub*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Volta*, and a prose remembrance of the poet Lucia Perillo published in the online journal *Seattle Review of Books*. He is currently collaborating on a play with his partner Christine Deavel, to be published in 2018 by Entre Rios Press. He also owns and operates a typeset press, occasionally publishing broadsides as Function Press and chapbooks as Cash Machine.