

sagittarius {the archer}

*you are tortured by the serpent's blood—ovid*

the gods were punishing prometheus  
for something—theft, or generosity.  
he was bound to a rock in tartarus,  
jupiter agreeing to free him if  
a suitable replacement could be found.

let's be real:  
it wasn't looking promising;  
and each day, in the meantime,  
some huge eagle  
kept claiming the titan's liver,  
after each night of it growing back.

{since we're on the subject,  
can we talk about that?  
i have a theory:  
maybe, maybe,  
the eagle had issues  
—anaemia or some kind of autoimmunity—

how this relates to sagittarius  
has to do with a centaur, chiron,  
renowned for his compassion and all-round  
excellence. . . .woe to this immortal horse-man!  
his name, in greek, meant *skilled with the hands*,  
yet even he couldn't heal himself  
from one particular wound;  
so, in his chironness, offered to make use  
of his irresolvable pain by switching places with prometheus.  
jupiter was moved by this,  
and gifted him a bit of sky. sister,  
being sag, you might want some more deets,  
like who wounded chiron, and why. it was  
an accident:  
heracles had been trying to stop  
some other centaurs from drinking his wine.  
he was shooting at them with venom-dipped  
arrows—the venom from a hydra that had proved  
hard to kill. . . .each cut-off head sprouting

and, well, there was p,  
with his presumably good-quality, previously free-range  
liver. . . . what if, for centuries,  
we've focussed on crime and punishment,  
civil disobedience, and necessary defiance,  
when all the greeks wanted  
was for us to eat more organ meat?}  
but

two new heads {which is how  
writing poems sometimes feels}.  
. . . in the night sky, the tail of constellation hydra  
lies between centaurus and my sign, libra—  
but what if that's backwards,  
the serpent's head near me? i am sorry  
by proximity, and for accidents  
of my blood.

bhater mondo

*for my mother*

my mother used to make little rice balls  
for me. she steamed and clattered about the  
cramped mustard kitchen, filling a pot with  
water, swelling and salting and songing  
the grains, plating them like planets longing  
for some lost centre, chirping, *my mother,*  
*o, she made me small small bhater mondo.*

one morning away from ringing school bells  
in fourteen perfect globular mouthfuls  
she fed me her story, and uncooked dreams.  
and although my fingers cannot craft rice  
they do cling stickily to the grain  
of history, ever remembering le monde—  
the world of sacrifice between her hands.

## flare

1 2

brief.	<i>flare. flare-up.</i> as in, <i>chronic, recurrent,</i> to which doctors and google say, <i>no cure.</i>
what issues from a firearm, a pistol.	flare (classed <i>mild</i> ) which yields no hospital stay. flare during which i wish someone would stay close—a good pair of arms, a chubby cat.
blaze of light, signalling distress at sea.	flare which, aside from xylocaine, one grins and bears, letting what swells and suppurates swell and suppurate. hidden flare for which no one brings flowers; onset upon which i draw curtains, shut out the day.
solar. what nasa classifies from <i>b</i> to <i>x</i> .	10/10, flare inflamed by terror. 10/10, flare which rhymes with <i>despair.</i> flare which i defy to fling back curtains, drink water, go walking in woods.
a short pass (football). a weak fly (baseball).	flare that unflares, momentarily, among wildflowers and friends: mary on the trail in front of me quick to declare her love of purple vetch;

late-'90s mark of popularity,  
which my jeans did not have. light,  
unsteady, glaring.

tyler, behind me, quick to quip, *mary,*  
*stop trying to make vetch happen; it's not*  
*going to happen.* (this welcome kind of flare  
perhaps closest to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century  
*to shine out with a sudden*  
*light.*) *flare,* as in, *sudden outburst of anger*  
toward one's own body; wretched body  
that i look at, when i dare. this body  
that means, *i'm alive, i'm surviving,* but which  
i am trying to survive.