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The Paleontologist with an Ear Infection

Susan Howe

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The Paleontologist with an Ear Infection

I am hearing through my bones
Older noises you don't lean into.
This morning's shower beat upon my skull
Till I was clean as an echo,
Sentience with the dust knocked out.

In the lab, a buzz and scrape rise in my back
As I fit vertebra to vertebra to the bony
Plate of the triceratops, its lumbering spine
Fossilized to brutal hardness still aquiver
Beneath my hands, inside my ears.

Now it is a hum along my jaw.
How can a cry heard one hundred
And thirty-five million years be old?
Always this beast feeds. The howl
Of the mortal fights its way out and in.

—Susan Howe