

AMANDA BALES

Brisance/Advice for Beheading a Chicken

Cut high and leave brain stem.
Enough, hear tell, that a man
once toured a headless pullet
sustained by grain water he
dripped down esophageal hole.

Cut low and blade meets bone.
Enough, I know, to call
a second strike, a third,
as many as it takes
to get the job done.

Space enough for error,
a measure learned by IED,
and so this morning saw you
pinned to floorboards, my face
mine and not mine as you labored
my name until I collapsed.

Light stretched, but we lay
as if in shadow of a predatory bird—
mouths pressed to pulses.
Your hands hatchet burdened.