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### Poem by Chris Gillen



### After Watching a Snake

*And in this disconcerting creature  
a tiny hunger*

—Jorie Graham

Myosin heavy chain in muscle  
roped to bone,  
breathless head bent in strain,  
narrow tail  
twisted as around the rod of  
Hermes,

neck buried in crystallography  
like ribless  
vertebrae deep under pitted

## After Watching a Snake

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scales.

This hungry fibril reappears,  
head above

grassy sinews and eyes locked on  
actin flies,  
pauses until the tropomyosin  
lash slips aside,  
baring tender fossa below.  
Again

and again the thick filament grips  
thin abdomens,  
knits nanometer sutures of power,  
stitches  
burly fibers to cold-blooded  
molecular desire.

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### Publishing Information

- Opening quote from “I Watched a Snake” by Jorie Graham in *Erosion* (Princeton University Press, 1983).

### Art Information

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Chris Gillen teaches animal physiology, introductory biology, and science writing at Kenyon College. His research group studies how larval and adult mosquitos regulate the volume and salt concentration of their internal fluids.

Gillen is author of *The Hidden Mechanics of Exercise* (Belknap Press, 2014) and *Reading Primary Literature* (Pearson, 2006). He was the recipient of the 2017 M. Patricia Morse Award for Excellence and Innovation in Science Education from the Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology.

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