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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.

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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