

rat

in the old days when the music mattered more
than the mold on his cheese or the vintage of his
swill this man danced circles around his appetite

he was conceived on a oak pew in a choir loft
he was abandoned the day the plague arrived
his mother's reasons were too raw to consider

he swept her final kiss under a rug in his heart
his dreams turned into tunnels silent and twisted
he circled the moon stamped on a miner's map

he staked his claim on flood ravaged hearts
he glued mirrors to the toes of his boots and
waded through laundromats looking for love

the people he calls friends are like old shirts
stolen from lines in backyards without fences
he finds the more they fade the better they fit

he enjoys irrigating his neighbors' contempt
he leaves tracks across pieces of their minds
this man's shadow can pick his own pocket

sons of the pioneers

rabbit

this man wishes the music wasn't so jagged
in his dreams the music is always dripping
drops of acoustic candy that nourish his delight

he dips his thumb in the wine and twirls his 'stash
he pulls on his big ear as he surveys the salad bar
he fingers the sudden hole in his empty pocket

his impeccable shadow ambushes his swagger
he samples a croûton before turning away
over his shoulder the silence grows louder

all the wrong strangers inspect his surprise
he feels like god might be squeezing his aorta
he feels like rubbing noses with the waitress

he is a son of a tenth generation heartbreaker
he has an alphabet's worth of brothers and sisters
his mother's carrot cake still makes men tremble

this man slips out the door into the arms of a new moon
he wakes up in a bed of roses but ends up yet again
in a mirror tending the scratches carved by thorns

sons of the pioneers

wolverine

this man is a master at making time
every sundown he matches wits with regret
too long in one place plays hell with his shadow

his foot prints are craters filling with snow
his heart is a canyon with caves on the walls
sooner or later he'll climb through them all

this man likes his elbow room frigid and vast
he likes his music empty of all but the beat
he unbuckles his belt when he sits down to eat

curiosity is an avalanche that overwhelms him
he gargles gin and broken glass to sharpen his smile
his big jaws chew on the words before he speaks

before he woos a woman with bones in her belly
and silence in her eyes and white painted teeth
another jazz angel on another moonlit street

in his dreams his lovers become mirrors where
he finds his children with names he can't remember
a turbulent murmur shudders his sleep

sons of the pioneers

snake

this man's heart is smaller than a chokecherry
mercy never rattles the locks on his thoughts
he grins as he dreams another man's dreams

he goes days without eating teasing desire
imagining the flavors of his favorite soufflé
he is a connoisseur with dirt under his nails

this man peddles fruit from the family tree
his mother sits in rusty moonlight mirror in hand
sticking out her tongue as she plucks silver hairs

this man's past is wrapped around a rhythm
he loves to bob his head and shake his tail
and bend every ear up and down church street

he whispers as he stretches the truth
listen closely to the parable of his want
hear the silence he carves when he moves

this man heats his shanty with shadows
he beats his rugs and sheds his skin before
the dew on his lawn turns to blood and freezes

sons of the pioneer