

## *At the Beach*

Looking at the photograph is somehow not unbearable: My friends, two dead, one low on T-cells, his white T-shirt an X-ray screen for the virus, which I imagine as a single, swimming paisley, a sardine with serrated fins and a neon spine.

I'm on a train, thinking about my friends and watching two women talk in sign language. I feel the energy and heft their talk generates, the weight of their words in the air the same heft as your presence in this picture, boys, the volume of late summer air at the beach.

Did you tea-dance that day? Write poems in the sunlight? Vamp with strangers? There is sun under your skin like the gold Sula found beneath Ajax's black. I calibrate the weight of your beautiful bones, the weight of your elbow, Melvin,

on Darrell's brown shoulder.