“Love Is Not an Emergency”

more like weather, that is

ubiquitous, true

or false spring: the ambivalence

we have for any picnic—

flies ass-up in the Jell-O;

the soft bulge of thunderheads.

Right now, the man in the booth

next to me

at the Nautilus Diner,

Madison, New Jersey,

is crying, but looks up

to order the famous disco fries.

So the world’s saddest thing shakes you

like a Magic 8 Ball;

and before him, the minstrel

who smeared on love’s blackface, rattling

his damage like a tambourine.

I have been the deadest nag

limping circles around

the paddock, have flown to beady pieces,

sick as the tongue of mercury

at the thermometer’s tip.

But let’s admit there’s a pleasure, too,

in living as we do,

like two-strike felons who smile

for the security cameras,

like love’s first responders,

stuffing our kits with enhancement

pills, Zig Zags, and Power Ball cards.

I read: *to greet* is the cognate for

*regret*, to weep, but welcome

our weeping,

because “we grant the name of love

to something less than love”;

because we all have to eat.