Clubbing

Jim Ferris

My foot is a club
the sight of it batters
the ten fingers ten toes
as long as it’s healthy
anything goes, praise for the normal
thank God we’re normal
exceptionally normal club
that seems to start in the head —
keep the head of the club level, keep
your head down, the competition is all
in your head, remember that cute baby harp seal —
or does it start at the foot of the bed,
or is it a berth, in the club car,
my foot was clubbed at birth
but my training has progressed,
the lub-dub heart club requests
the pleasure of your bequests,
preserve your pious normate face,
your demure coquette heart tart
from which all else deviates,
make mine a club sandwich,
the universe is a club-
like thing, infinite memberships —
do you really want in a club
that accepts members like
you? Opt out now from this unkempt
circle with unlimited centers
(quit thinking in so few dimensions,
in this universe all have extension),
every man a king, the king of clubs,
the club will foot the bill,
every night there’s a line to get in,
my club is a foot long exactly,
release your inner amputee,
send all your clannish limbs to me,
as long as they are healthy, they
can keep your phantom pain some company,  
send me ten fingers, ten toes,  
give or take a foot — our secret handshake,  
normally, nobody knows.
Why I’ll Never Meet Tony Hoagland

Jim Ferris

1. That picture makes him look eight feet tall. He’ll never even see me.
2. I’m not cool enough.
3. Or too cool. No — see number 2.

my bones are so warped (do not try to straighten me, Doctor Tony, Doctor Apollo), and the naked men describe my proud and angry flesh (I’ll never be Pope), my gentle curves, as if (a samba is out of place here) their silly show of superiority (judgmental — do not count Tony among them — he wasn’t even there in spirit) made up for a secret shame their nakedness can neither hide

... nor display
(exfoliate, then expiate)
oh, muscles are so good, why don’t you work out more, cover my face and put this one there — to sculpt is to be a god — for symmetry must be a prize that trumps even a hairless ass

Doctor Tony, dissect my flesh with your x-ray vision, I dare you, use your surgical wit, I am but half-assed on the left, apply to these hapless, happy bones your yardstick that masquerades as something else — a lighter, a handkerchief, a fine blond purse. I take nothing back — for these two fine trochaic feet, for Bilochun, the fine green tea from Suzhou that tastes of where the earth becomes the tree,
for the fine way he kept Vince Lombardi, the president (pick one), and Elvis (pick one) from the poem — my first wife, the blonde, said I hated pain because I’d had so much in my life — I said fine, it makes for smaller neighborhoods — but smell of passion fruit uninges me in the produce section, purple ball of wrinkles at my nose parts, inhale until the stock boy bustles round like Tony Hoagland in a zebra shirt, whistle at his mouth parts, to protect the fruit from some fruit, this set of pitched vibrations that seems to be my voice — you really sound like that — and smell and photokinetic sense of humor or its simulacrum — she’s been dead for years, and so have I, but the jumble of passion fruit, just-ripe pears, the strawberries blooming in the snow, all the ways there are to make a fool of myself, just ask Tony Hoagland, just carve a pumpkin, the naked men will dress and leave in time, my ball and socket ache, familiar, in the fresh metallic breeze, silly man, I am so grateful I can hardly stand.
try to be graceful in a body
that defies grace, pull the nodding
noggin, touch the face of that bobble
head doll of Jesus the spacious, hobbled
legs belong in this place, to be snobby
is to be clueless, base, even dotty, knotty, plodding,
no finish line to this race, to use the body
is its own grace — when we’re naughty,
when we chase our tails, when we get snotty,
way off-base, when we say we know the odds, we
bet to place or show, I can’t be caught, please,
the taste is bitter but I’m not really
full yet, in my haste I’ve forgotten
or I’ve wasted so much, not rotten
so much as out of pace, which is odd be-
cause the taste is not in the buds nearly
as much as in place and time, gaudy
in its tasteless disregard either
for the dictates of the lordly
or the chastened no longer haughty
saving face — life is sloppy,
that is its grace, come, meet your body