

artisanal inquiry (the philosopher's stoned)

graphite drawing pencils
throw the best first draft.
4b are best or
even 3 will carve
a page with tight
black furrows, dark dust
dancing in the inscribed
lines, smudging in the wake
of trailing fingers
lingering in the trough
of inspired fragments
phrased, then struck through
with brash hash marks
and baroque curlicues
of errant motivated grey –
erasure's not an option,
what's made dare not be
unmade, just realigned –
then phrased again
until each word is not
pinned as much as
mashed into the stock,
as a pestle marries
matter to the mortar,
powder of my industry
awaiting whispered breath
of anxious inspiration,
last whisked grit of carbon cover,
that reveals what I am making
might transmute lead into gold.

JOHN F. SHERRY, JR.

embroidering in the margin,
the scribbler tries to
edge the text like a lawn,
with filaments of
argument and assent,
and threads of
wandering non sequitur
hedging the published lines,
the call and response
a stichomythic tension
joining writer and inscriber
in a disembodied dance

the reader,
hanging on this cross
examination speckling each page,
pencil poised, above the fray,
wrestling with the
commentary's call to arms,
the urge to answer galling
as a gauntlet thrown for unknown cause,
commits to this pitched battle,
crimps correspondents in
cramped corners, and
fills them full of lead

the badinage of bookfolk,
a fractious throwback
in this age of Charon
ferrying across synaptic gaps
of cyberspace our
instant impulse to be
seen to mean, these
books that circulate as gifts
bear greater value for inscription,
like the sharing of kula shells,
the record of their journeys
etched in margins

JOHN F. SHERRY, JR.

sitting in the back of a crowded lecture hall

the lecturer drones on,
hewing to the script,
siphoning hope out of the room,
relentless in the piling on of detail,
punishing the audience with
earnest plodding effort,
the lecturer drones on,
as Zeno's paradox exacts
an awful toll,
each pulse of digital duration
feeling chiseled on the wall clock,
each minute dragging
ever longer than the last,
the lecturer drones on,
a Chinese water torture
of irrelevance,
the echo of the info drip
drives students to their own devices,
the lecturer drones on,
amidst I-M'ing, e-mail
checking, YouTube surfing,
iPod nodding and the shopping
for anything to spring
these confined scholars
from this sapping sell.
the lecturer drones on,
being history,
and i agree
with the stage whisper
of a bailing refugee:
i must uncarcerate
my sorry ass,
the lecturer drones on

JOHN F. SHERRY, JR.

CHICKASAW CRAFT THRENODY

2015

JOHN F. SHERRY JR. | JOHN SCHOUTEN | HILARY DOWNEY