

## **The Law of Ruins**

Truth is, though, pieces of your speech  
peak through when I am tired.

When I've tried too long to keep up  
with the old men in the Book Barn's backroom.

When I've tried too hard to keep up  
with the old men in the chess park  
where they sit in ageless and endless rows and ranks,  
and I have grown bone-weary,

I will send my r's to the back of my throat.

I will savor them as you did,  
especially in the moments of your madness with me.

I will gargle alveolar approximate as you did,  
and trim the terminal consonants  
from my hard-stop words,  
slurring my way, paving my sleep-time tongue  
to your tempo.

Truth be told, when you wore your Sunday fedora,  
when you smoked your Sunday cigars,  
when you took a seat and propped up your legs  
in Broca's Area,

you left the smoldering remains of your arrival  
like the ashes of an ashen-shattered Dresden,  
a bull-shaken Guernica,  
a race-burned Tulsa,

each asking for me to find my feet,  
to find each piece left piled high,  
and build the city back

in a language that only my tribe and I,

in our building rite,  
and our burning time,  
will ever understand.