

WANT

Before the specialist diagnosed *tumor*,
we would kid about the knot
on old Trav's head,
the pecan-sized lump
we speculated was the entirety
of his canine brain.

It's still a good joke—
the truth doesn't change
just because the news is bad—
and the hard truth is
he's never been bright, this dog
who doesn't sit, shake hands, roll over,

beg. He won't stay, and he won't heel,
though it can't be said
that this mottled-eyed pooch
(one mostly brown, the other
mostly blue) wasn't figured
for more important things—

had he drawn a life outside
our own, he would have made
a splendid nursing-home dog,
the cut of his chin
such perfect shape for resting
on a lovelorn knee.

Lucky Trav—he doesn't even notice
the new loop and swirl
of his bending down to eat,
that momentary *elsewhere*,
the slight freeze of seizure
that stumbles him into vertigo.

No. This guy's all appetite—
every night at supptime
the kibble and green beans
he's eaten for years
are welcomed like a new best friend.
And why should it be otherwise?

There's nothing wrong with this dog
that a full bowl won't cure.
How like us he is—happy, dumb
quiver of hunger and tongue,
pink flares of nostrils, flagging
tail, his legs gone unbuckled.

What, you've never known desire
to make your knees go weak?