**A Bone on a Pebbled Creek Bed**

Stephen Frech

i.

an object on the bottom of a creek

is not where or often what it seems

the bending, refracting of light

the sheen and bright surface of water

to retrieve it you must

locate with the hand

and not the eye

by touch, by error

by feeling your way

ii.

I have learned to enter the creek

downstream

so the current around my ankles

and my hand breaking the surface

disturb

less

the water

over the objects we find

iii.

poking through the ether

a bone washed clean

carried by a current

and left on a pebbled creek bed

looking every bit a stone

what is it, my son asked

the jawbone of a young deer

the teeth still intact

bones from the past

iv.

Heisenberg like a proverb

searching alters the object

like deer that feel the hunter’s eyes

and are not themselves

nothing is untouched

light itself

altered

bent

dispersed

playing tricks

v.

to find, to have in hand

is not what you had imagined

the thing as it truly is

if you are lucky

you are deceived from the start

and looking for one of the many wrong things

find the right one

vi.

In Eakins’ paintings of *Rowers*

you see the last glimpse

of an unselfconscious world

before photography dictated our seeing

rowers at rest on the water

staring off

the look of those who don’t yet know

they are being watched

vii.

long after his death

researchers found among Eakins’ things

photographs:

beach scenes

landscapes

figures

he had painted with the aid of photographs

instead of painting exclusively from life

viii.

some gloated

some felt cheated

as if photographs

could teach you anything

about nostalgia for the now

for the present moment

passing

about rowers drifting

who see for themselves

the passing

and become the past

it happens in an instant

and you cannot unsee it

ix.

the now

leaves its bones behind

a bevy of deer

a female leads

deep into reticence

apprehension

as into a mist

x.

the jawbone sits now

on a chair by the door

what is it, my son asks

having asked already

many times

and knowing

but questions of essence,

deep in us,

come out that way

simple

hard to know

we are ourselves

rowers at rest

who begin to drift

and in drifting

begin to feel the current

the persistent tug of water

the liquid now

almost imperceptibly carrying us

what is it, we ask again and again

because the moment has changed

and the one asking

and the one lifting the bone from a cold creek