

I NEVER WANTED TO SPEAK

of the house facing Cowboy Park
where my childhood pets are buried.
Eight small skulls scattered, each
a burned-out bulb keeping the fig tree

company, guarding the needles
I'd eventually unearth. My neighbor,

the infected queen, taught me
how to shoot down pigeons.

Think of them as compliments, he'd say.
By the time I was old enough to know

what he meant, it was too late
for him. Still, he slept inside me

for many seasons, cocking
his shotgun at a flinching sky.

Disguised in pill and sneer,
he waited for warmth to enter the body.