

The Physiotherapist's Trainee Or The White-Tailed Dear

"Beauty can pierce one like a pain."

—Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*

Each morning he rises
and goes to his agony
like a rutting roebuck
to an icy stream
to quench confused,
unbearable thirsts.

.
The therapist angles
his recalcitrant arm,
constantly implores:
"relax . relax . relax:

relax into the pain."

.
He tries—

.
—by watching
a young woman
with bright eyes
like a startled doe
bend . to fill the whirlpool;
her firm, complicit rump
stretching her white slacks
tight as his stiff tendon.

.
Some day
(her training finished)
she too
will get to hurt injured men,

.
guide . them
through the woods
to the pain . zone

.
and beyond

.
to a pastoral, flexible
place of grace.

--Ken Stange