

A Pain, A Fencepost, A Black-and-White Film

*... pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot
be denied and that which cannot be confirmed. —Elaine Scarry*

Because pain is not *for* anything,
or *of* it—because these objects
enter the body indifferent
times, spaces—a man

locks his teeth as history clicks
its two thin hands along his spine.
To hear of someone else's pain
is to doubt. *Hiroshima*

is a film he once saw and in it,
fishing for explanation, a woman
shows the half of her
face which is gone.

For one to have pain
is to have certainty. Evidence
walks into a hospital
and sits with its hands

folded on its paper
knee. *Surely this,*
the doctors say, or this
will explain the phenomenon

of the average man who skimmed an iron
fencepost through his jaw. Months later,
he is complaining of fits, does not kiss
his wife, feels the ghost of a limb

while sleeping. When asked
what it does, he says, *sometimes*
it sleeps. Sometimes it feels
like a village on fire.