

Vole (published in *Jubilat* #12, ed. Jennifer Bervin, 2006)

Blind as a vow, my nose has a shovel on it. I have a strong neck. I am making headway. Crumbly sand with softer, wetter, humus in my face; behind me a narrow tunnel I could be proud of but for what. It is simply how far I have come. Sometimes the tunnel behind me caves in. It doesn't matter. I can survive long periods without air. The earth is surprisingly full of air, particulate and porous, unless I hit clay. The medium that I move through varies in density. Sometimes I have to spit to dissolve a little of what's ahead. My hands are webbed. They work like paddles. I am moving forward but not in a straight line. The iron in my nose-shovel senses the pull of magnetic fields. These signals are often interrupted by buried electrical lines or the exploratory beeps of lonesome men swinging measuring instruments up above. But no one is watching me. I don't know how far I have come, or where I began. But I am making headway. I have nipples, little pink tits, that hurt from scraping on the grit tunnel bottom. My coarse hair grows from front to back; something terrible would happen if I backed up. I don't know when I started. May. My memory has been erased and replaced many times since then. I feel worms. I eat them. I also eat beetles along with the dirt. I could be quicker if I wasn't digesting as I dig. If I hadn't chosen to push against dirt down here, to live hidden, hard, slow, blind, unmapped. But I am telling this. I would prefer not to tell. To remain blind and speechless after disgorging. But I can't help myself. My movements reverberate. I feel those reverberations as a second effect. I need to comment. My method? Momentum (or inertia?), sensory involvement in empirical research, refusal of the metaphor of light (to "uncover," to "discover," to "reveal," to "clarify," to "make apparent") and myths of progress (as if the present is related to the past in an uninterrupted litany of cause and effect). As if transparency were possible, or revelation anything other than a shudder in the heart. My nose is a tool and a guide, the tubular digestive tract my mechanical shovel, filter, and mind; my tiny webbed feet work with the force of monster tractor tires—slow, unwieldy, inexorable. Encountering resistance in every direction, my work is joyful, I am making a path, but not necessarily one that could (or ought) to (ever) be followed. Making space, temporarily. When I break into a network of other tunnels, and space is amplified a thousand times by linking up to the work of others, my exaltation is almost equal to my surprise and disorientation.