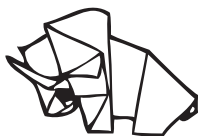


## A.D. Shufflebarger

*I wouldn't live in the buffalo cave*



even though Grandma nearly cries  
whenever I hand over a string of words  
as muddy as her dollar store pearls,

raves to our long line of relatives *thank God*  
*we have a family artist* on a starry night  
when we're burning hot dogs.

Those early Spaniards made bison  
beautiful—ocher coats smeared  
red as blood as in the crevices, eyes glazed

from the kill. I imagine if Van Gogh  
dusted over his own thin fingers,  
we'd find the same agile form

stamped on that damp wall in replicated  
negatives. But my hands don't belong  
in this cave, where the oldest artists

made sense of stampedes  
and knew the exact stance of a boar  
pulling up tubers in summer.

Grandma hopes to see my book  
before she's a skeleton. She doesn't know  
how I sit dumbly at our dying campfire

and run a stick in circles through the dirt.  
And while I labor to master the animal's flared nostrils,  
the buffalo cave is long complete.