

## REVENGE OF THE JAGGED AMBUSH BUG

Please don't taunt the scrivener  
unless he is plopping around in a useless plot,  
then you may lampoon him at will.  
Don't butter the monkeys, just don't.  
And no etudes on the ballfield after eight.  
Permits are required for flagellation,  
keep your messianic woes to yourself.  
Breathing on the bumblebees is strictly forbidden.  
No muffins permitted in the aviary.  
Talking dogs must keep it to a whisper.  
Neither should you pee on the piglet.  
You may boogie on the bridge but only lightly.  
Try not to spend the summer in a state of torpor.  
If you must eructate at the funeral  
do so behind a bush, and make it sound  
as if a rhinoceros is charging.  
Do not write on the gazebo.  
Do not sleep during the ranting.  
Do not rant during the sleeping.  
This is just a fragment of what I remember  
of my childhood, and a rollercoaster  
I never dared ride, and some daisies,  
and ghouls, thousands of ghouls  
dancing on our graves. I mean rules,  
thousands of rules digging our graves.  
That's much better, that's approaching  
the gazebo and deliberately, fiercely  
writing on it, words that will cauterize  
the delicate, the wan and sickly passerby:  
Marcus Aurelius is a horse's ass.  
There, now I can die with my boots on.

*“This is just a fragment of what I remember / of my childhood” is my favorite swerve not only in Jim’s work, but in all of poetry. The litany of rules preceding it is hilarious (especially when read aloud by Jim) until that turn alerts and reorients us. For me, this poem contains more wisdom than all of Marcus Aurelius. And now that I have small children of my own, who have motivated me to make meager, contradictory efforts to both protect and inspire them, the poem carries even greater comic meaning.*

- David Roderick