

JOHN WALL BARGER
CRYSTAL BONES

They say after you die
your soul returns
to have sex with whom-
& whatever you've dreamed of,
you Casanova incubus,
haunting vaginas,
mouths & assholes.

Yes, the lord is a businessman.
He takes your life,
but always negotiates
a little something
in recompense.

They say your soul returns
to your favourite café
in the guise of a mangy
dog, fur scabby,
oh there you are—look!—
placing your paw
in the palm of a little girl
sipping a soda.

Your soul returns as
a skeletal saint
brushing your moustache
with a small comb
nimble-fingered
as you step into a brothel.

Your soul returns
as a French Buddhist nun
in maroon robes

braced by a cane,
lamenting to a stranger
at a bus stop
about the other nuns,
their cruelty, *antipathique*
to your condition.
The stranger, blinking, asks,
What condition?
Crystal bones, you say.
As it turns out—
because the lord God's
sense of humour
is depraved—your soul
has *also* returned
as that stranger:
a Mexican with AIDS,
spinnny from his morning dose
of Epzicom. Although
you (the stranger)
are curious indeed
about the secret crystal bones
under the robes of the nun,
you find yourself
staring at a fly
crawling like a desert pilgrim
across her bald head.
Then a stain in the road
catches your eye:
oil or bile or gall,
you rub rub rub it with your foot.
Not oil, no, it is just
the nun's shadow,
lesion at the corner
of the mouth
of the world.