In Murcia

I couldn't make my mind work,
thirty sleepless hours' cellophane

snugging me, soap-bubble thoughts
adrift in the wee-hour, sopping

pall of sour food & piss. Phil Payette's
blunt finger kept poking my chest

in the post-blizzard sun. Yahtzee's
ganja-occluded rules buzzed

above my cartoon head. The times
on the ticket played tricks. The clerk

had left, muttering *Sí pronto* as he stepped
aboard his Vespa, me whimpering

(whimpering!) *Qué pasa?* in his wake.
Was there a bus? Was there ever a bus?

Dress modestly the guidebook said,
Spain is a Catholic country so there

I stood in damp jeans & a soaked shirt
black as the habits the nuns wore

---

in the slick, sunny, goddamned
photograph, bright sand & bluest blue,

sailboat-sprinkled sea behind them.
What about the vast backpack sure

to supply the spontaneous month
on the Costa Something? An absurd

prop in a future confession (*El Americano ileso, Padre, no se preocupe*), two women

leaning on a lamppost a few yards away,
microscopic skirts glinting in the dim light

that reminded me of nothing, which is what
we said. In a few minutes, a three-wheeled

jalopy coughed to a stop & the women
squeezed in & began singing as they

rattled away. The *Americano* hates
to have to, any have-to. He needed

to risk something he's forgotten
& that's what? A fact? The bubble-

thoughts shimmer violet & red.
The dice & cards of Yahtzee
mean

nothing but giggles in the
bungalow
squatting smack-dab on the hot
asphalt

---

behind Williams Liquors, the Yankee
wanting nothing but to stand in the gentle

Mediterranean surf with a plate of snails
& grilled anchovies, hungering now

for nothing but a quilt in sub-zero night
& blurts of absurdity leading to sleep,

Phil Payette having ordered us to wash
the walls to earn the security deposit

so we could give it to the Boston landlord,
streets filthy slush tunnels. I couldn't

make my mind work sponging nothing
off the wallpaper nor chipping ice

off the three-decker's front steps,
our U-Haul plugging Curtis Street

for hours while drivers gunned
on rotten ice back to Powderhouse,

screaming *Ah yah fuckin ahsshole!*

despite having to have seen the fucking

truck when making the turn. Hey!
That's true! No truck till you made

the turn, then it fills the mind just as
no Spanish bus till it roars around

---

the corner & glides to a stop right
where I hallucinated it, but the mind

has no power to conjure such sylvan
gusts of air-conditioned ambrosia,

so a rumpled Yankee & his three-story
backpack floated down the aisle

to a plush seat, two quarts of kefir
ninety-six minutes in the future & Jean

did say in the slush-shoveling infinity
If you ever go to Spain, make it Barcelona

having spent the blizzard in a hostel
near *la Sagrada Família*, not a dime

in her pockets on the two-hour bus ride
north to help wash walls & once more

be one of us, Almería wavering on the
horizon,
every head tilted up as a dubbed American

epic unspooled on the screen above the
driver.

- John Repp