

Exposed

Beneath the shell of bone lies
not a heart, but a person

Who this is doesn't start from the outside
already exposed

Smallest thread
pulled endless
breaks seams above bone

arguments and struggles
fall away, piled on the floor
forgotten

Beliefs and fears fall next,
the great debate silent

Experience, knowledge, know-how
bring the pile knee-high
bright bone still protecting

Once that thread is pulled
what's left is me . . . naked in truth

Flesh that beats
knows but one rhythm: Survival

All the pieces that make it work,
real and imagined, feed from that rhythm
give the thumping a reason for living

Pull every bit from what
you think makes me who I am
into an exotic enigmatic miracle of humanity
composed of flesh and bone

This, who I am,
raw and strong, is no gimmick
no pretense or pretty words

This, who I am,
while protected by shell of bone,
beats strong . . . exposed . . . from inside out

—Susan Justiniano