Nothing New Here

This afternoon I drove down Old Santa Fe Trail

to the boot repair shop with a plan to perfect

my old walking shoes with new shoestrings. My life

runs a gamut, like matryoshka, from large to small.

Mr. Jacobs unspools a length of black cord —

*Do you want 40 inches ?* and razor-cuts it. His pliers

pinch copper aglets to the ends of each string.

Rows of wooden lasts sway on the wall.

Doll-sized leather boots crowd a display case.

*The cash register’s perfectly good,* he tells me.

*It dates to the Twenties* *and it came with the place*.

He goes on, *The city archaeologist brought me a ledger*

*of Spanish maps of the Tenorio grant.* He waves at the Trail.

*Outside was just a path. My family was here.*

He shrugs. *Last century’s Spanish flu, it’s not so long ago.*

*Take my father’s birth and his father’s, soon you’re back*

*to seventeen-sixty-five when they built this adobe.*

*They’re nothing new either, animal diseases leaping to humans.*

I say brilliantly, *This one came from pangolins*. Suddenly

he’s gone, to return with a dusty album. My curiosity’s piqued.

*Pangolins look exactly like anteaters—here, you can see.*

Ron Jacobs flips to a shot of a pair of tall boots

he built years ago from anteater skin, here in the shop

on Old Santa Fe Trail where I buy my shoestrings.