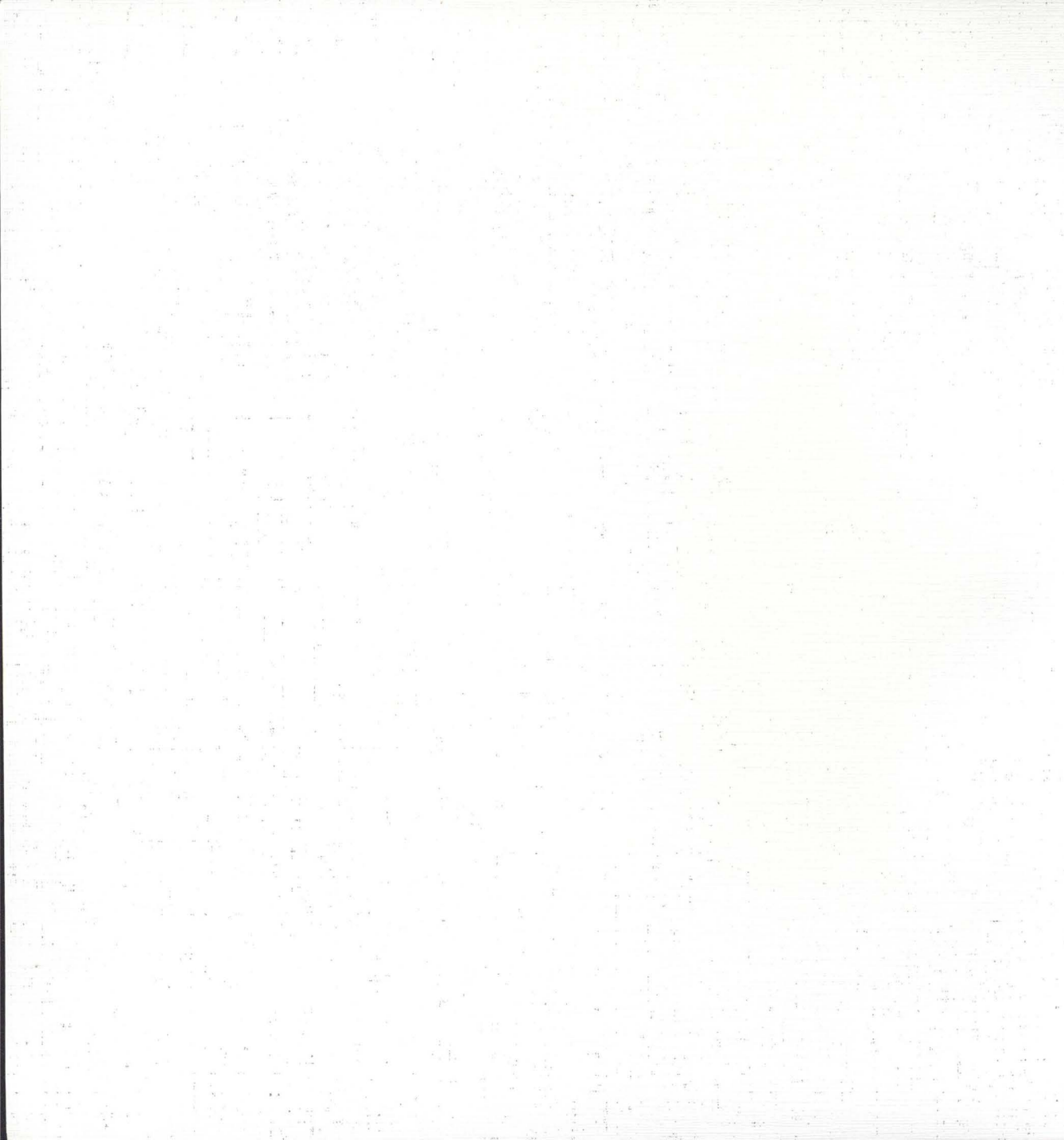


reflector





were you ready to listen and to understand in the gaps
were you ready to understand with the dance in the gaps
were you ready to do the dip with father in the gaps
were you ready to be embraced like Jerusalem in the gaps
were you ready to give birth to the world in the gaps

~John Taggart

The Reflector 2002-2003

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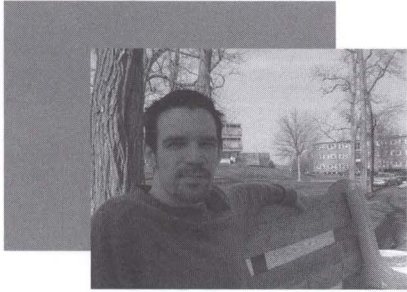
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Crossing the River Jordan

william hicklin

I watch her and her eyes turn black. ‘Do you want some?’ Her voice has an edge to it. She sits on the couch across the room and holds her breast out to me. I feel a slight fear, a sense of wrongness so I shake my head no, speechless. ‘Then get out of here! Stop staring at me!’

I had come into the living room from the porch, where I had been playing. My mother sat on the couch, nursing my sister, and I caught her in the act. I stared at her, transfixed at the sight of my sister at her breast then I watched, intrigued and a little ashamed, as she took her other breast out and offered it to me with that edge to her voice. I got scared, shook my head no, and she yelled at me, told me to go away as if I had been leering at her, as if I were a bad boy for watching her nurse my sister.

•

This is my first distinct memory of my mother; I was three years old—four years later, she died. In the last clear image I have of her, she’s squatting on the floor by the bathtub, buttocks on her heels, turning from something in the tub to look at me.

Her hair falls in wet ringlets around her shoulders; her face is flushed. I notice the pool of water at her feet, how wet her clothes are, her controlled breathing, and take a closer look at the something in the tub—I ask her a question and she springs towards me, beautiful and terrible, her eyes deepened by the darkness invading them. It is her eyes, I think, that link the two images so completely in my mind, the first and the last, that create a sense of unity between the two.

In the last clear image I have of her she moved so gracefully, like a snake striking in a slow, fluid moment. At the time I thought nothing of that movement—I sensed danger and I ran—but I've replayed that moment over and over, and I am convinced that was the most graceful I'd ever seen her move, except when she was swimming.

She was so tall and thin and awkward, and she walked all angles, loose limbed, just on the edge of control. You held your breath watching her; an air of suspense hung over her—someone who moved like that was bound to break things.

•

In the water she was different, graceful, natural. Her movements were sinuous, smooth, her body fanned out into the water, loosed its coils, her nails flashed like scales and the angles of her joints melted. Jointless she swam, moved in slow undulations, weightless, free of the grave awkwardness of gravity.

I remember a game mom played with me—she would smile, bring her face close till our foreheads and noses touched, and then say, 'Boo!' I'd squeal in delight, she'd pull back, smile, bump heads with me, and say, 'Boo!' I remember her warm smell, the fragrance of her hair falling around me, the safety I felt there in her lap.

•

Interspersed throughout my childhood, mom suffered from what dad called 'her episodes.' Most of her episodes attacked her right after she and dad had a fight—we would hear them screaming in the kitchen, pots banging, words ringing out, then silence. Soon we'd hear dad's voice—just dad's—quizzical, imploring, then demanding.

She punished him with her silence.

•

Dad died this year, in the same house my brothers and sister were murdered in. I don't know why he decided to stay there after mom killed them and herself, after she tried to kill me. I wonder if he couldn't sell the house or if he just didn't have the energy to move. I never questioned it till I got older; at seven, whatever comes your way is normal, to some degree. Certain questions never occur to you; you may question why your mommy turned monster or why this big hole has opened up where a family used to be, but you don't wonder why you don't move out of the house where so much badness happened.

I look up at her face. She looks down and smiles at me. As she brings her head close to mine, her face hardens and her eyes fill with darkness, and when our heads bump she says, 'Boo!' I wake with a start and hear a heavy breath, very close; startled and disoriented I only know something very big is very near to me. Then the breathing settles into a rhythmic pattern and distinguishes itself as my wife's. My body relaxes, I say a short prayer and succumb to the weight of gravity and weariness.


•

When people ask me why I believe in God, I tell them, 'Because of my parents.' They did teach me about Jesus when I was little. You know, 'Jesus love the little children,' and all the associated theology about God's disposition towards the wee ones. But nothing in the 'Jesus loves me, this I know' philosophy prepared me for mom turned murderer.

I hated God for a while—a family used to be here, where these ghosts reside. I once had a mother and brothers and a sister; I was left with a father who was himself a ghost, who never looked at me, who blamed me for surviving.

And so each of my parents pushed me towards God—my mother attempted to kill me and my father ignored me. I couldn't live without promise of tenderness or hope or purpose and so reluctantly I shuffled back to God, seeking comfort.

mouthed. I have no anchor. I wake spinning and my soul betrays me; it cries out to the God I hate.



•

I was born in the south; I moved north for two reasons: 1. I did not want to marry a southern girl. Literature stereotypes southern women as fragile and demented (look at Faulkner's Emily or William's Blanche, for example), and as my mother was southern, fragile, and demented, I decided that if I ever married, I'd marry a Yankee. 2. I love winter. The sight of water frozen, hard and impenetrable, soothes me.

I am underwater, choking. I wake clutching my throat, gasping for air.


•

I believed in my parents; I believed that they were faultless, that they were honest, and that they could protect me from all harm; when I was frightened or needed warmth, I called on them. God Almighty was less real and less powerful to me than my mom and dad. Then, suddenly, our world began falling apart; the orderliness and safety of our universe was replaced by chaos, uncertainty, and fear. Our mother, fully half of the deity we worshipped, had gone out of her head. She was suddenly given to fits of rage; she would wail and pull at her hair, scratch her skin till she bled.

Dad was powerless against her. She treated him with open contempt and derided his weak attempts to soothe her. She became extremely inconsistent with us, sometimes warm and affectionate, some times withdrawn and sullen and looking at us as if we were a riddle she had to solve.

But we grew accustomed to our mother's weirdness. This was our family, how we lived, and though mom still scared us sometimes, she scared us less. She took pills that induced a state of quiet, robotic performance. And for us, that resembled stability.

•



I view my mother as a murderer, my father as a ghost. How will my children view me when I die? What will my legacy be? I want to be a fortress, a stronghold, I want my children to trust me and I want my wife to respect me.

Sometimes I fear that I am like my parents: I feel rage, a monster slips in and looks out through my eyes: I feel separate, feeble and distant as if I were underwater trying to run.

I am not a fortress.

All I wanted to do was change my daughter's diaper. I was exhausted and she was screaming and twisting, pushing my arms away. Suddenly I realized that she hated me—I could see the hate in her eyes, in her angry little face; I could feel her rejection as she pushed me away, and without thinking I grabbed her neck with my teeth and growled at her. Her shrieks pierced me, I drew her to me, drew her naked, warm little body to me. I wanted to console her, to let her know she was safe in daddy's arms.

•

I didn't even hesitate when she called me into the bathroom. Her voice when she called to me was clear, strong and unwavering. I didn't have a sensation that something was terribly wrong until I rounded the corner and looked through the door.

I saw my mother kneeling by the tub then saw my four-month-old brother floating face down, his arms raised above his head, his fists clasped into tight little balls as if in protest or victory. My stomach clenched in fear and I looked to my mother for help. Her eyes were dark and empty and alien, and her hair hung around her head in loose wet strands. I didn't know what to say, how to break that murderous silence. I couldn't move, couldn't speak, and mom just squatted there and watched me.

•

I am a fortress. I will cover my children with my strong arms. I will hide them in my shadow. I will protect them.

I bring my face close to my daughter's, and as our noses and foreheads bump together I say, 'Boo!' She squeals in delight.

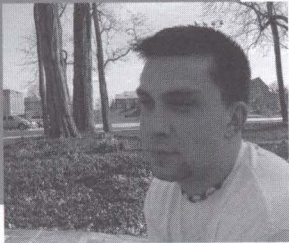
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I finally found my voice. 'What's wrong with John?' And mom sprung, slow and sure, moving towards me as her body uncoiled, and I started running, in a panic. But where could I run? I was in my house, my familiar safe house, the place I'd run *to* if I were in danger. I ran to the family room, thinking perhaps I could hide behind the couch, but she was right behind me. I kept yelling 'mommy' and 'mommy, no' and this thing, this being that looked like my mother caught me up in her iron hands and carried me out of the room.

I plead and fought all the way down the hall and into the bathroom, grabbing whatever I could reach; pictures, doorframes, towel racks, the sink. I put my feet down and tried to stand when mom lowered me to the bathtub, but she forced my legs out from under me and pushed my face down into the water. I struggled to get air, pushed against the bottom of the tub, and a few times I got my head out of the water, but then she'd force me down again. I felt my brother's body bumping around; felt him bump against my arms and torso and legs as I fought to get air.

I tried to hold my breath; I waited for some one to save me: Jesus or dad, or maybe mom would come to her senses and lift me out of the tub and cry and hold me and make me warm and safe. Instead, I inhaled and choked, coughed and breathed and coughed and then I blacked out.

I dream I'm standing on the bank of a great river; a voice calls to me, clear and strong and unwavering but so quiet, like the lingering tone of a bell ringing a deep note; I cannot tell if the voice is coming from the river or the other shore or it could be just a thought it tells me to step in, to step across, I don't have to be afraid—I'm afraid—the water is the color of steel and it looks deep it's moving fast and I can't swim, but then the voice sounds again and it is so persistent, so patient, and its resonance sets my soul ringing in response, responding in fear and anticipation as my foot slides away from the bank and breaks the surface of the water.



Headphone Guerilla

jason polICASTRO

Tam-clad ruffneck soulchild hums basslines
Tech-stepping up the subway stairs
Charged with militant euphoria,
En garde with rhythmic armor,
against the paralyzing pressure of
less time and more information.
His spirit shadowboxes
In a seething ring of mutating bass
And furious polyrhythms,
the beats break
spilling frantic funk
over graffiti-covered walls and
fractured sidewalks,
careening off of rusty fire escapes.
His head bobs steadily
In time with the sinister syncopation bludgeoning his headphones
and arming his psyche.
Soldier of a nameless generation,
the bionic beats and bass shrapnel
Steel him to the march
bringing jungle to the concrete.

First Meeting

drea verone

Of a glance—so warm—

I can almost sense
ardent orchids—
a flourishing fragrance

From different wines
we have fermented
bitter-sweet—
complimented—

With lush scent—
our lust emits
this nocturnal sentiment.



Paint

jonathan lister

I

Que es blanco?

Where is the edge of the earth to be found?
The dust is all the median.

Que es blanco?

Do I look as you would expect? Are you planning
to tell me that I and the side of that house are one in the same?
The colorblind still see the difference,
The difference that the United Caucasian college fund does not
exist, and will never exist. Jenny Getz cannot call Michigan home,
her face was just too plain, no artful way around that.

II

We have an underlying truth that the Israelites are now living the Night of
The Long Knives with American weapons.
check the settlements! The streets are made from olive trees, at curfew the
walls
still sing of warriors with ticking hearts.
They are the evil ones? You did not own the land you carved into, and
bartered
for with pox infested blankets but you defend it as your own.

III

Sorry fellas, I did not (do not) have the luxury of the world's guilt,

Liberilo

Equality does not mean we all get a turn to be the hypocrite

Or Does It?

Maybe you love how the other half lives, maybe yr kinda' getting used
to privilege-That would make you human-Get what you can, while you can,

We exist in an open market of free trade, *laissez faire*,

Capitalism; fine with me.

Yet you play martyr,

Yet you argue the antipathy of bastard and trueborn like there's a fucking
difference,

We are a tragedy unto ourselves; we might as well have all shouted "*Death to
Tyrants*," we may as well have all taken one behind the ear
and play the second stage past the house lights.

Call you freedom fighter, call you revolutionary, call you a goddamn

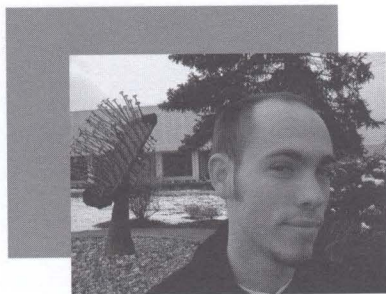
OPPORTUNIST

I could never have said a word.

Liberisi

I am but a can of paint, stirred beyond all recognition of its components,
shelved with the rest, speaking a tongue too bold to be my own

Que es blanco?



Through the Gaps

john monn

Vision is difficult. Our eyelashes accumulate the snowflakes that fall, forming an icy border around the chrome landscape in front of us. Through the gaps of the falling flakes, we see the road we walk on. Flanked by telephone wires and snow banks, the black pavement runs to a line of mountains where a glass factory sits - gray smoke rising from three smokestacks.

Crunch. Stop. Crunch, crunch, crunch. Stop. Look. Twitch, sniff. Stop. Crunch, Crunch.

Lying motionless near the tree, he watches the squirrel that looks at him with big black eyes. *Does he see me or just sense me?* he wonders, as the squirrel's nose twitches. The squirrel resumes munching on his acorns.

A low rumbling vibrates the air. Louder, louder...silence. A low rumbling. Louder, louder...silence. *Coldmetalscream* and silence tears as a white light bathes us from behind. A blue car streaks past and, shifting to a final gear, vanishes as quickly as it appeared.

She flips on the windshield wipers as she accelerates down the road. She glances at the Bell Tower Inspirational Book, *Emerson's Self-Reliance*, which sits on the dashboard. On the inside of the back cover an inked tree spreads its dark lines across the expansive field of the white page. It resembles the tree near the glass plant. However, she sees only blackness - a silken darkness that conceals sensual movement and muffles sounds of love. Her husband speaks softly to an unknown woman. *Coldmetalscream* as the car scratches against a snow bank. She regains control and assures her passenger that it's okay. *I knew he wasn't just going for walks*. She doesn't notice the black figure she passes.

The boy looks at the book on the dashboard. He had found the book hidden under the bed in his father's bedroom. It's not what he had expected to *Coldmetalscream* and bracing, extending his hands, shielding his face, the boy prepares for impact. "It's okay, honey," his mother reassures. He looks at her with a doubtful glance...it was not what he expected to find. His mother had told him that his father hid candy under his bed, but the boy found only the book. When he gave his mother what he had found, she was surprised. But she gave him candy for his efforts. Removing his glance from his mother, he watches the orange stick arch to the higher numbers on the speedometer. The engine accelerates as he tears open a Hershey bar.

Crunch, crunch, crunch: shoes trample a salted road. We follow the fresh tracks the blue car left behind. We think we smell the road salt, but we can't. Our nose drips mucus down to our lips. We taste the salt in our mucus, and think we smell road salt. *Squish*. We've stepped in salt and snow mush. It seeps into our thin shoes and nips our feet with a damp bite. The wind increases and attacks the openings in our clothing. We pull the scarf tighter, rub our hands together, and continue to watch the road pass beneath our shoes. The road's black pavement turns orange, then black, then orange, then black. We look up and see a blue car blinking at us with orange four-ways.

The man is almost asleep. He looks down at his feet and notices his dirty walking shoes that his wife had bought him. She was concerned with his health and wanted him to start a walking program. *She didn't like my gut.* They are top-of-the-line with all the desired features of a Reebok walking shoe: they are stabilized with a super-pronation mold, lightweight, cushioned, and made with DMX technology. *But they didn't prevent me from slipping on a walnut, did they?* he thinks.

“Sami, please put down the chocolate and put on your jacket. It’s going to be cold outside,” she tells her son. As the boy scrambles to wrap his plump frame in his coat, she looks into the rear-view mirror and pencils a burgundy line around the edge of her lips. “Honey, where’s my lip-balm?” Sami opens the glove box and hands her the small vial. She opens the container, releasing a raspberry aroma. She spreads the balm over her lips and does the same to her son. He struggles against her goeey touch: “Mom, don’t put that stuff on me!” But she applies the balm anyway and finishes it off by touching his nose with it. “You don’t want your lips to get sore, honey.” She sets down the container on the dashboard and picks up the book. *I thought he was looking at pornography.* She turns on the four-ways. *Maybe he isn’t cheating.* Opening the door, a blast of cold wind slaps her face, launching the self-doubt out of her mind. She takes a deep breath and gets out of the car. Her son follows.

The hand exists now, as we touch the hood of the blue car. The numb nerves awaken; we realize we are cold. The cheekbone is tense and teeth are clinched. Air burns as it travels down the esophagus and swirls in an empty stomach. Our vision seems sharper as we watch the exhaust fumes float from the rear of the car. The warm hand moves to the door handle.

Slipping on the walnut was the best moment in my life, he thinks. He remembers the swollen ankle that shined like an overripe plum, the pain that rushed through his skin, how it seemed so foreign, yet exciting to him. He didn't want to lose that pain: that sense of living. He slips into sleep, enjoying the mixture of snow and sweat that soaks his clothes.

His soft chest quivers. He listens and looks, tenses, then explodes. He scurries up the tree.

He watches his mother as she compares the book's drawing with the tree in the center of the field as they trample through the snow. His right hand grips his mother's free hand. With his other hand he wipes his pink lips, attempting to remove the raspberry balm his mother had applied. But from the crystallized mucus on his black glove, he realizes he wiped his nose instead of his lips. *Oh no, these aren't my play gloves!* he thinks. He is wearing his new gloves that his mother had bought him for special occasions. They weren't to get dirty. That's what play gloves were for. Sami hides his guilt in his coat pocket.

Red flashes in the corner of the eye. A red light blinks near the dashboard. An alarm? Our hand ceases in its approach towards the car handle. The hood is warm. The inside must be warmer. But the red light is blinking. The hood slightly bends as we climb onto it. We lie on the blue surface and absorb its warmth like a snake in the sun. Looking to the snowdrift beside the car, we view two sets of ascending footprints, one set larger than the other. Beyond the drift, one large figure holds hands with a smaller one. They move in a straight line for the isolated tree.



He lies underneath the tree. She gazes at him: *This is not the man I married.* Once clothed in fine Armani linen, he now lies encased in a frozen red flannel shirt, a rigid pair of blue jeans and dirty walking shoes. An orange knit-cap clashes with the rest of his outfit in a futile attempt to contain a large lump of knotty hair that seeps from underneath the cap's edges. The carefully groomed hair she had loved is gone; stubble plagues his chin and neck. She encounters the walking shoes once again. *He's changed.* She looks at the book.

The two figures are hovering over a third larger figure. The angles of the small round one move. Something moves towards us...a sound...

The boy releases his hand from his mother's grasp. He pulls out his hidden glove and attempts to remove the mucus with snow. His mother gazes at the man. He glances at the man. Soon the mucus-removal project evolves into a snowball-building project. He packs the snow firmly between his two plump hands. Sweat stains, classmates laughing. He aims for the man's face.

Darkness. No sound. A vibration. Air is moving. The vibration is a hum as soft as flapping hummingbird wings. An object slices through air. Now, a frozen whistle. Yet it is not heard. Red flash. A warm rush of crushing pain ripples through the skin. The wind's whisper is muted by a sharp scream. A piercing ARHH!! The red disappears, replaced by a chrome landscape. His mouth is open. *I'm screaming*, he thinks. A boy laughs.

The wind that flings icy snowdrift darts in our eyes carries a man's scream to us. The hood's warmth is subsiding: the wind may be blowing the warmth away, we may be absorbing the warmth too quickly, or the wind may be stealing the warmth from underneath our hair follicles. But it's all the same to us. We just want to get warm. Body tissue is tight and this chokes our bloodline's oxygen flow. We remove ourselves from the car's hood. *Squish*. Our toes are still cold. The red light is blinking. It must be warm inside.

Endorphins flow into his bloodstream. Something wet bites his shoulder blades. Water? No...snow. Melted snow? No, no, sweat. Sweat trapped...trapped in clothing. He silently sighs in pleasure. *This is more pleasure than I've known in a while*. The boy's laughter subsides. The boy is to his right. *He must have thrown it*. "Sami!" A woman's voice, harsh yet warm. He smiles: *it's Sami!* He searches for the source of the voice. To his left is a woman, her long hair dances with the wind. He recognizes the Banana Republic winter wear. He frowns while his temple begins to pulsate: *how did she know I was here?* Further away, a thin line of exhaust fume rises between the boy and mother. The boy is wearing Gap gloves. *She must have driven him here. He'll never learn anything*.

"Sami!" The warmth of the voice undermined the scolding tone. She thought the boy understood this, but he seemed to become choked up. She was proud of her son's snowball throw. *I wish I had thought of it*. She notices the man's frown. *He knows he's been caught*. A brown paper bag sits beside him. She sighs, *He must come here to drink*. She picks up the bag, anticipating a solid cylinder to be hidden within its folds. But the bag conceals many small round objects. She tenses, her heart drums angry beats. *Condoms!*

Why is he smiling? I hit him in the face, didn't I? The skin on his forehead buckles under the weight of the perplexity. The dirty walking shoes. His throat swells with a lump. The grizzly chin. Sami adjusts his scarf to conceal quivering lips. Sami hears the buzz of his father's electric shaver in the early morning. A mirror holds his father's face beside his own face on which he recklessly slides a Popsicle stick on his yet unbroken chin skin. He faintly senses the coffee aroma and the distinctive hint of fresh ink on his father's newspaper as he drove him to school on his way to work. But then the walking shoes arrive, his father stops shaving, and, soon afterwards, his father moves into the guest bedroom. His father frowns. Sami smells his shame: the sweat marks on the front of his shirt return. His classmates are laughing. He stops sniffing, thinking, *He made me walk to school and the kids laughed at me!*

In front, the red light blinks. Behind, the dark figures vibrate in the field. A cold hand shivers as it moves to the door handle. The wind whispers. Red light blinks. *Click*. Red light blinks. The red light blinks but no alarm - a small chuckle escapes our lips in a small puff of crystallized breath. The opened door releases a crashing wave of warm air that washes over our face. Our cheekbones exist. Shoulders relax and breathing becomes enjoyable again as we sit down on the tan cushioned driver seat. We shut the door and silence remains. And realizing the wind is absent the hair follicles awaken and stretch their web to catch the warm air. Raspberries in December?

Where's my squirrel? He looks to the tree but there is no sign of his comrade. *I would hide too*. Acorns crackle as they scatter over the frozen landscape. His wife is pouring them out of his bag. He views the Emerson book in her right hand. He senses her and her bathroom articles. He's surrounded by the scent of Body Shop soap, skin care lotions, wrinkle creams, fifty dollar plush towels, crimson, teeth-whitening products, and various other must-haves.


But he's saved by the image of himself under the sink, reading Emerson. He's saved by the words on the page: they drape a curtain over the chaos. But then the knocking would come. *She wouldn't stop knocking!* So he'd escape to the

tree and feed the squirrels that dropped the walnut that opened the gateway to his new life. But now she's knocking again. He gazes at the tree.

The tree branches spread across the dead white sky like crevices in a shattered ice sheet. Acorns spill across the white ground. *Acorns?* The sounds of dark love evaporate along with the movement in the silken blackness. But white silence descends. She drops the book. "I just wanted to bring you your book"

An open vial of lip balm. That's where the raspberry comes from. We place a tingling finger into the container. The balm is soft and cool. We spread it on our lips and pieces of dead skin flake, falling from our lips. So we continue to apply. Our lips absorb a large portion of the vial until they are smooth and lubricated. We smack our lips and the raspberry becomes ripe, opens, and ascends to our nose. The raspberry unlocks memories and anticipations of spring. The car becomes warmer and it almost turns green.

I can't help it if I'm a little fat. It wasn't even my fault; my father made me walk... "I just wanted to bring you your book." His mother's voice, defeated. Calmness cools the boy's angry coil of nerves. *I just wanted to bring you your book? Is that all she could think of?* A rivulet of mucus mocks the boy's sniffing. His jaw tenses as he wipes his nose with his clean glove. "Honey, you should't wipe your nose with your good gloves." He snuffles, his father sighs. "Where are your play gloves?" *Where's my chocolate?* His father laughs. The boy turns around and walks back to the car. "Samuel, look at me!"

 *You just wanted to bring me my book?* A sigh escapes, leaping from his lips into the freezing air. *Oh. You just wanted to bring me my book.* He moves his eyes from the tree to his wife. Her lips move, sending messages to his son. *She always had beautiful lips.* He laughs, temporarily meditating on the tender curves of her mouth. *Raspberry.* He tastes the raspberries from their wedding kiss. “Samuel, look at me!” The boy is walking away.

Red waves ripple through the green atmosphere. Our stomach exists, chewing itself as it pines for raspberries. A candy bar sits on the dashboard. The foil crinkles as we expose a couple bars of chocolate. Our mouth waters, but we don't eat. Two eyes.

A sniffle. Her white silence is stained with messy rooms, broken ankles, dirty dishes and green specked tissues two inches from the trash bin. Sami smears mucus on his good gloves. An imaginary burr clogs her throat. She swallows. “Honey, you shouldn't wipe your nose with your good gloves.” Another sniffle rings in her mind like an eternal dinner bell. “Where are your play gloves?” Her husband laughs; the burr grows. *Is it funny that I wonder where my son's play gloves are?* Her heart slips, skipping a beat as her son walks away. “Samuel, look at me!”

The small figure stares at us.

Her heart drums harder, compensating for the missed beat. She thinks of following her son. But the boy isn't moving.

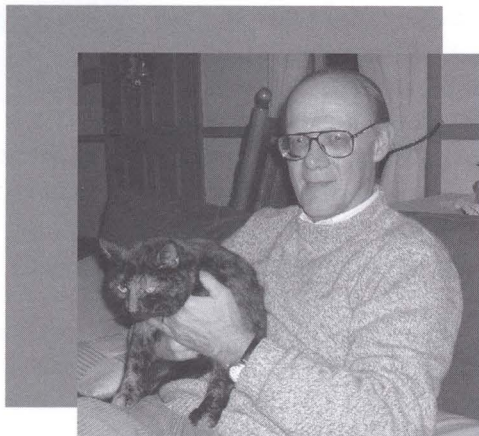
The candy bar drops as we open the door. The wind rushes in, freezing our nerves.

Didn't I teach him to look at his mother when spoken to? He raises himself from the ground but moves no further. The boy isn't moving.

We place one foot outside. *Squish.*

“Who are you?”

More slush. Aching ears. The boy repeats the question and the two larger figures move towards us. We retreat to the car, closing the door. Raspberry. The windshield is covered. Chocolate. We flip the windshield wipers on. They're coming. The spotted windshield frames a snow-covered road. Orange four ways blink. Small hands on the window. The road is still there. “Let us in!” It's warm inside. The speedometer glows. *Where are we going?*



Selections from an Interview with John Taggart

Jaclyn Cole: Could you comment on how you developed your interpretation of the Rothko Chapel paintings into the “Rothko Chapel Poem”?

John Taggart: It was a fairly long process, I can't remember when I started getting interested in Rothko. There are a couple of factors that contribute to the way I write, specifically to the way you see the line forming itself to the overarching form. It has to do with sound, the musical, the aural, but it also has to do with the visual. The linking term for both is depth, the sense you get of depth from sound and sense of depth with the visual, and what attracted me with Rothko (it was a direct attraction) was this sense of great depth in Rothko. The way of gaining depth in language is through these recurring patterns with sometimes very slow gradual variations, and sometimes too it's as though dirt is thrown on that; it's as though you have part of an orchestra going away, it's been going away for some time, let's say it's the string section. A composer might deliberately bring in against that, say, a horn section. Not necessarily doing something completely different by the virtue of being a horn section, but something different with sound, it's going to give texture and variety to that. I have done poems that responded to Rothko paintings and I'd seen a number of Rothko paintings, I became more and more aware of the existence of the Houston Rothko Chapel. It was almost like a dare that I knew that this was the most important thing in his work and I did not know how I would write. It was through a grant from the university that helped me. I went to Houston and stayed with a former Ship graduate. I was there for almost a week, and for that week, I would go to the Chapel and just sit there, and take notes almost continuously. It's funny, the guards at the

chapel told me I'd been in there just about longer than anyone. I'm not sure if it was exactly a complement. *Laughs*

JC: *Laughing* Longer than the college girls commenting "Could you paint this?"

JT: That was actual, I heard that, in fact, it sort of took on a sociology of that building because it was there, I had to observe everything that went on in and around it. The power of the paintings is something that people are just not prepared for. To begin with, I had seen pictures, I had seen architectural sketches of the chapel. When you first see it, it's an utter disappointment, it doesn't look very big at all. It's not, it's an eight sided one-story building and the outside of the building is nondescript. You walk in, and there's a little foyer area and then there are two open doorways, essentially an entrance and an exit. What's shocking about the Rothko Chapel, is that its only purpose was to house those paintings. That's what it was built for. They use it for interfaith, conferences, people are married there, they have all sorts of ceremonial, social occasions there. Its function, its whole design is built for those paintings. Now unlike this room, when you see the art on the walls, this is neutral, non-threatening, not very definite space. You walk in to the chapel, it's one of those rare occasions where you're in a space that is totally defined. You feel, remember it's octagonal, the paintings are mounted flush to the wall, so they seem essentially the wall. They're just a few feet smaller than the walls themselves, so when you walk in its totally unlike any experience with art you've ever had. People would come into the chapel, they'd be chattering and doing this and that, and it would be just as though something sucked the breath out of them. The volume level just sank to nothing, and the people are thinking "*Where am I?*" The center of the chapel has typically a little bench, so it's sort of you and the paintings, and the paintings are considerably larger than you are. That's it. There are no little plaques on the wall saying this was done in such and such a date or it means such and such; it's a direct experience, and one for which we're not prepared. For me, having filled up an entire notebook with these reactions, questions, responses to the work, and I also talked to the curators about their history and so forth. It's very interesting how they're made, because a big problem with these paintings is they are now at the point that they need restoration, but they cannot be removed. The scale is hard to believe, the way they were installed is they were lowered into the building through a helicopter. That's how large they are. Once the top is put on, that's it, and so very quickly they realized they were in a desperate situation. Rothko committed suicide right before the chapel was formally inaugurated, so they had to track down all his assistants and find out literally how he made them. They knew, for example, that the paint he used was his own invention, made of various raw pigments and certain processes like slow heating, using linseed

oil. They needed to know exactly what was in that mixture and the conditions under which it was made. Knowing this was important to me. When I got back to Ship there was a moment when you could've written a big question mark on my forehead, as I was wondering "What's next?" So for a while I was pretty nervous in terms of what would be an accurate response to this work as well as a linguistic illustration of what Rothko does. I wanted to be in sympathy to what he had done but go beyond that. I didn't want the poem to be descriptive.

JC: And, in that same vein...

JT: *Laughs* Sorry to go on there...

JC: No, it's interesting, it was great! In your "Eight Headnotes To Robert Creeley", you mention 'a blackening of the breast' in weaning a child. Could you comment on the origins of this practice, as well as the use of the color black in the "Rothko Chapel Poem"?

JT: That's actually a quotation from Kierkegaard, and there are variations on that quotation. Kierkegaard was a nineteenth century Danish theologian/philosopher. At the time Rothko was working on the chapel paintings, one of Kierkegaard's books, really a combination of two small books called *Fear and Trembling* and the other called *The Sickness unto Death*, and they're published as a little paperback volume. Rothko was very impressed by that and for me that was a key linkage. It offered me language, literally Kierkegaard's language for my use, feeling at the same time that I'm doing something that is in basic sympathy with Rothko's thoughts, whatever I might then do with that thought. Kierkegaard's sympathetic to my own thought, I'd been reading Kierkegaard since high school, and in many ways it's like coming home from a new angle. What that got me to do was read those two books all over again, and really read almost all of Kierkegaard again. They contributed, and what Kierkegaard is getting at with that business of weaning and blackening of the breast, is that this is a terrible thing, this is a human hardship to endure, and what he's leading up to is Abraham and Isaac, the sacrifice. If it's hard for the mother and child in that situation and hard for the child of faith and belief to understand there is a reason for this, then how much more so for Abraham and Isaac, the sacrifice of Isaac a command to sacrifice his son, and how much greater is Abraham's faith. He doesn't understand Abraham; that this faith is so great, that it's beyond any of our usual categories.

have a flat north, south, east, west, and the facet that is between those, there are these huge paintings that essentially are minor variations of the same thing. They are huge, something like 15 feet wide by almost that long. They're often described as plum color. A deep, royal purple color, and the way I came at that was that phrase in the poem, "red after black", that this is the experience of the color of red seen through or having that black in place, upon it. It has other echoes beyond just the hue, but we'll leave it at that.

Jason Macey: Could you contrast the approach of the "Rothko Chapel Poem" with the approach that you take in *Remaining in Light*, specifically contrasting the overarching approach and looking at Rothko Chapel, looking at these eight paintings, and the metaphor of the ant, looking at the single painting in *Remaining In Light*?

JT: One is poetry, one is prose. *Laughs* Rothko in a way is logical to me, he in a sense is a contemporary painter, but he's been long dead, he remains a contemporary important painter, it's sort of odd and unfair how certain people over time simply emerge. There's not really a publicity agent at work, they simply emerge. Obviously there are many gifted painters of Rothko's era, and many of them we still talk about but Rothko simply emerged, he's out there in a way that many people would say Picasso is the painter of the 20th century. Obviously there are many painters in the 20th century, but Picasso was preeminent. Hopper, on the other hand, if you stop me in a dark alley and say, "Who are your five favorite painters?" I would've died before I would have said Hopper. He seems sort of old hat, close to being mainstream, everybody knows him, they've got reproductions of his paintings on shopping bags and on calendars. What I find fascinating in Hopper is just how complex his paintings really are. For example the standard take on Hopper is that he is a realist American painter, he's going to show you what America is really like at a certain time. As you may know, many of his paintings, so called landscape paintings from that Cape Cod area where he's spend his summers. My friend Toby Olson, who lives there, once told me he went deliberately looking for the locations of several Hopper paintings that give Cape Cod place names in the titles. You can't find them, and the reason is (I don't think Hopper's trying to fool anyone) he's taken a normal scene and transformed it. Also in his people, the men and women in his paintings, when you look at them closely, they are no historic person. You can't say, "Oh, that's so and so of course, who must've been his mistress in 1930" or something like that. They have an odd theater like quality about them. They're human, and yet they seem kind of masked. So that book was written incrementally, the first part started out as a long essay. That didn't seem to quite do it, so I wrote another one, I think I wrote three and submitted them to a publisher and the publisher said this is very interesting but at this rate we'd be publishing a pamphlet, how about a little more. I

added a fourth chapter in that book, and of course it became involved in questions of reading and what it suggests is the painting as a text. What I came to in that is how complicated Hopper as a text was, and in a sense how wildly he's misread, making him out to be simply a representative "realist American" painter.

JM: I was just thinking of the overarching approach, the eight versus reading into something deeper with the one specific painting.

JT: What this does to is look into the business of reproductions of the painting, what reproductions do with that painting is every reproduction essentially presents a different painting. Essentially it's a different woman, and what that tells you is the reading process is never over. Every time you reproduce the text, it's a different painting, it's a different text, so it requires a different reading and thus that whole figure of the Mobius strip, and on you go.

* * * * *

JC: Could you comment on your use of visual aesthetic in relation to sound and the reading of the printed poem (i.e. the side-by-side poem "Body and Soul" in *Loop* as opposed to *Standing Wave*, which appears on the page in block form)?

JT: "Body and Soul" in *Loop*; those are variations on the song itself, and those are set up in terms of the musical structure of the song itself. Literally, I wanted a poem for two readers, and the poem in a sense only comes together when two people are reading it. Now I've only ever done it that way, in fact, once. The poet Ted Pearson and myself read it that way in San Francisco once, and it went perfectly after about 10 minutes of rehearsal over lunch, before the reading. I decided, after that it would never be as good again, and decided not to attempt it. Not only as a performance poem, but "Body and Soul" as an age-old dialogue or conversation between two opposed notions, so not only is it two parts, but two supposedly opposed parts. Marvin Gaye is a different conception. As I recall, the number of sections in the poem "Marvin Gaye Suite" coincides with the number of tunes on the album. Each one is a reaction to the piece. In general, I want people to be forced, to be compelled to voice the poems, this is why there is no internal punctuation. Also, to voice the poem insists on the importance of it. If it is read simply on the page, it becomes a news article. The eye glazes over it, it is discussed as information (rather curious, odd information). I want to insist upon the poem as more than information, that it is in sense an event in itself. I am interested in these other qualities of emphasis, expression, and depth. If the poem is merely information, then the possibility of depth is just one more string of data going with all the others. They're set up to promote sound or

sounding. They have their own sound, and to make sense, it helps to sound them. I think a typical experience a reader would have with these poems is that the first time you read them silently, you feel as though you're in a traffic accident, and that obviously the writer must be crazy, must be on drugs, something peculiar is going on. It's only when you sound them out that their syntactic patterns become clear.

JM: We noticed a strong connection between *Remaining in Light*, *Standing Wave*, *Loop*, and even *When the Saints*. We were particularly intrigued by the title *Remaining in Light*, which is clearly attributed to the Talking Heads album *Remain In Light*. Could you talk about the influence of that group and album on the loops we have found in the writing?

JT: It doesn't have any more influence than that. It's specific to that book. It's simply that I found the terms of that song to be relevant to Hopper's painting, and I liked the 'misconnection' that typically you would not think about a Talking Heads song and Edward Hopper at the same time. I wanted to use some of Byrne's lyrics in the book. Curiously, one of the problems with the book was getting permission, I should say paying for permission to use the lyrics. I used very few because they were very expensive, and I had to sign some enormous, long contract for just those pieces. When I protested that this was a scholarly publication, that this was probably not going to make millions, the secretary told me, "But we must protect our artists".

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JM: Could you comment on Louis Zukofsky's influence on sound and mathematics in your poetry?

JT: Zukofsky's emphasis on music was important and in a way was something of a challenge. If you look at Louis's work, you'll see that there are many musical references and quotations concerning music. One of the things I set myself up to do was to just take that a little further; that if music is important to writing, somehow important to poetry, let's just see how important, let's see how far you can go with it. One of the things I've been interested in for some time is the adoption or adaptation of musical form as the form for the poem. This is an example that has a great deal to do with Zukofsky. I'd point out that the emphasis is not exactly original with Zukofsky, you find it actually in Pound, prior to Zukofsky. At the same time, it's the same sort of challenge, to take these suggestions, these evaluations of music and take them further, see what you can do with it, yet at the same time not merely make the writing a description of a musical event. For this reason I'm more interested in the composition process, or composition

form, than say the performance event. I'm interested in ways of making music as promoting ways of making poems. I remember when I was essentially your age, it seemed clear that the older forms weren't very interesting, while they could be useful to hone your skills, that writing in those forms was not going to produce very strong poems in themselves. I remember thinking, what else could you use as a pattern, a template, a model, and the answer for me was music. Early on especially it was jazz, people like Leonard Coleman and John Coltrane. I would try all kinds of things, literally I would write stanzas, let's say it's a four line stanza, and each line will set up so that it will somehow duplicate the sound of each instrument in a quartet. Those were probably too literal, too point-to-point connections, but they were helpful in getting to this and thinking about what could be done.

JC: Could you comment on your relationship with Robert Duncan, first as a student, then as a peer, and how this effected your poetry?

JT: Well, I was never a student per se. He was one of the poets I most admired; he the poet of the Black Mountain group I came to last. With most college students, these people were prominent, although Charles Olson and Robert Creeley were probably the most common of Black Mountain people. With Duncan, I was connected with him but not quite as much. When I came to Duncan at first as a college student I was a bit put off. The diction and references are very romantic, his diction is romantic, his poems are stuffed with arcane references. I respected it a great deal, but he was someone I was not anxious to have dinner with at that time. To the degree that I read him as a college student, there's no doubt about it, I misread him. I can well remember a reading I organized in my college, we did Duncan's poem "Poem Beginning With A Line From Pindar", which is a very major, serious, monumental poem. My friends had a small jazz group, and I had another friend who was a very dramatic college actor, so I appointed him to be the official vocal interpreter of this poem, and the group had to come up with music to accompany this. They come up with this laid back, Stan Getz bossa-nova style jazz, and then he gives his impassioned version of it. Of course, it was 500 degrees wrong, but we were trying. It took me a long time to become comfortable with Robert's work. A part of his work that is most crucial to me is an essay that is called "The Truth and Mark of Merit", which is one of his most beautiful works ever. We gradually started a correspondence, this is in the early days while I was teaching at Shippensburg. I decided he was the logical person to be the subject of my magazine *Maps*. There's a funny story connected with that. One of the things Robert was insistent upon was that the poem you see in the book should be as much as possible a direct reflection of the poem as he wrote it. He wanted me to get the printer to do plates that reproduced his handwriting, direct, which is a very stylized, clear handwriting. I told him that the printer was a very fine letter press printer, and it would be too expensive to do it this

other way. He found this to be a monstrous violation of his artistic integrity. He wrote this long preface for the issue of the magazine in which he blasts me for making this violation, and being part of this vast, evil empire that has distorted the poet's impulse, the poet's composition. Of course, I had the privilege of printing this in the issue.

Later, we became closer, he gave a very fine reading at Ship. He met with a number of students and classes and was there for several days. Then I saw him not long before he died, and it was a very moving experience; shocking, because he was a very vital person and because of his illness he was yellow and sort of crumpled up. One of the things about Robert is he was probably the most well read writer that I'd ever met. He'd read almost everything, it seemed, from children's books to theosophy, to everything in literature. In a way that was part of his problem, because he had all of this furniture in his house so to speak, and to write his own poem, he had to first move all of the furniture before there was space wherein to get to.

JM: You've had a number of significant artistic relationships throughout your career besides Robert Duncan. The likes of Robert Creeley and Brad Haas have written poems for you. Could you discuss the role of these relationships in your life as a poet?

JT: Well, I'll talk about Bob Creeley. I encountered his work in a funny way. I think I was a junior in college, and at the time I was very excited about a lot of contemporary poetry. I was doing an undergraduate thesis on Wallace Stevens. My girlfriend of the moment happened to be reading Creeley's "For Love", which made me of course, quite jealous, and I was sure there couldn't be much to his stuff. She recommended it, she thought I would find it useful and interesting. It's a wonderful book, it's one of the major books of the 60s, it's probably second to Ginsberg's "Howl" in terms of something you'd see people carrying around. I'm sure it still sells quite well. To skip ahead in time, I was a graduate student at Syracuse, and one of Bob's books came out, it's called "The Words", and I wrote him a little postcard, one of my reactions to his poems. He sent me a postcard back that said something like that was his idea too. Over time we developed a correspondence and friendship; he's given a number of readings at Shippensburg. It was especially important to me that the first time I ever read the "Rothko Chapel Poem" in Buffalo that he introduced me at that reading, it was a very moving occasion. His voice and his self I find exciting and interesting. I'm always interested in each of his new works.



Muse

jason macey

I. The Choice

Separation is the key element of any want or desire while lost at sea in the hope of salvation
for the lowly-

Hope and paraffin build among the ceaseless eternity of swell after swell of desire upon the
desert of fatigue and retribution and arrogance-

First gaze is set at the sun at a distance damning to the sailor when she is too far to call home
and too close and too powerful to escape or forget-

Wharf rats and men share similar fates in the desperate struggle for the pier and an end to
isolation when the wind no longer cries out in the unspoken promise of return-

But a return becomes a dream, as the last line is taken in the world that exists on dry land
changes and only the tattered buildings that look perfect for squatting remain-

And all else remains an idea in the idle hope of crystallization of time to the one moment
where seduction and assurance and long legs and an arm reaching out in the rain
could remain unchanged-

A ship becomes a world where the choice must be made between the stark hope of the beauty
reached in infinity or the grim realization of an unforgiving sea's amorous embrace-
So that you now understand that I chose the distance of my Muse over the cold black
existence in a whispered prayer where I would damn fate to finally reach her.

II. Clouds Roll In

Dark clouds preaching to the water below roll over an otherwise placid scene of despair surrounded by lifeless islands in listless glory rising above the water in sharp sudden release from drowning-

Wind breaks the calm and blushes crimson over the surface of the water that cuts around the tiny vessel like a temperamental Atlas now becoming disturbed by the gravity of the clouds-

The seas now roll in a roving poem sung by a siren sixty fathoms below as the ship is tossed and pitched beating an irregular cadence of daring and pleading at once-

The once lethargic surface comes to life as blue-green winter grows and builds in youth's anger to become disenchanted and tainted but knowledgeable in sudden grayness-

Mist bites the air in a fury of escape release from the inevitable return to the virulent surface in the realization that the moment's reprieve is quickly ending in a last reproach against fate-

Young sailors on deck gain a sudden faith in God as the first true understanding of helplessness becomes apparent in their frantic cries against the sound of approaching infamy-

The experience of ages becomes apparent in the grim smile of a sailor who has been cut many times before and he has seen rough weather and he has been to the edge of a pitching world and so he no longer fears-

Cries of alarm and direction are muffled as the siren's mournful chorus gains intensity and pulls the ship to the surrounding jagged shoals of the tiny islands pulling in all directions at once-

And I, clinging to a rustic helm of oak, begin to wonder in a rush of pure adrenaline of the meaning of hope of faith of that which I cannot control of the fate that seeks to destroy destiny.

III. The Storm Rages

Heaven and sea tear open upon the explosion of unbridled heat and luminescence as the first bolt of lightning signals a symphony of a thousand parts sung by countless individual drops of rain-

The strike is immense in size and sound and seems to surround the quaking vessel like a thousand voices screaming escape screaming freedom screaming oblivion of sea and sky-

Rain pours as a minion from a paradoxical fire and stings and it is at once a blanket of rough steel and melting nightmare of unrequited past drowned in alcohol freely given-

Swells cease to exist as does sea leaving in the wake continuous earthquake of pounding bone and unpolished sapphire breaking crushing exploding over the strands of Mississippi Delta Blues prospering despite age-

Darkness from storm and night prevails over lights silenced searching for direction and only mythological bolts of lightning thrown from an unseen Zeus show the way in a struggle to escape-

The surrounding islands become a blind executioner awaiting the thundering echo of sentence passed from the pulse of the storm over the ship now powerless to resist or go unnoticed on the lam-

Silent ship scurries like a field mouse over an ephemeral plane dissolving as gentle field into starry rock face amidst chrome water throwing the craft as a malevolent child playing in a tub with a plastic boat-

A paradox becomes my desires when the risks of fraternity among men are weighed against the solace of the siren's final embrace in the sudden necessity of weaning both life and death at once from constancy-

So mindfully I do chase the song below the waves, steering the vessel and all aboard towards that certainty in my sudden realization of the divinity of marriage between dream and night.

IV. The Unveiling of the Muse

When time and certainty and direction have combined cast aside hope, I find myself lost in an inescapable storm at sea given to the senselessness of succumbing to the siren's call-
It is then that she comes to me like a shaman's healing vision proclaiming an end to perfidy in a new course not bound to the illusions struck down by the forcefulness of reality-
Then among the dark flamboyance of the storm sung by the siren I hear laughter seamlessly gliding meandering in rare soft air listfully pronouncing her Dancing Shadow in defiance of authority-
In the pitch black of storm in fury does the name of my Muse rage between fate and destiny and pierce the savage heart of it all in a light more blinding than the first not yet forgotten-
My languid will seems suddenly to fill the sails of a thousand ships as punitive fate and destiny no longer shackle spirit now free from the enchanting siren's melody now free to reach for her shadow reaching back-
The triumph of will over fate signals the sudden retreat of storm and siren, signals the breaking of a new day over a sea of broken glass as her smile shows the direction of safety and home in the distance-
And in the moment's reprieve I whispered across eternity that I don't know what dream I will chase tomorrow, but today I will cross whatever may lie ahead to reach my Muse, waiting in the far reaches of hope.



The Great Duck Caper

joseph burns

Sarah watched idly from across the stream, acutely curious about who would actually pay for a taxicab to come to Monocacy Park. A tall old man bundled in a great brown overcoat got out and spent a moment paying the taxi driver. He then tried with apparent difficulty to negotiate his way on stiff, unready legs down the grassy slope that separated the asphalt path along the water from the road. It seemed obvious that if the great bulk of the man got tipped on the precipitous descent the result would be disastrous. She felt relief when the figure backed away and trundled off down the road, likely to approach the place by a safer route. There were stairs at a distance; doubtless he would find them.

She returned to watching the little girl on the stream bank near the road who squealed with nervous delight, clutching her daddy's hand, as the ducks gobbled bread, flung approximately at the water. Sarah fell to reminiscence of Sundays long ago, before her own daddy got old and sick and miserable. Today she had come here to get away from them — her parents.

Sarah loved the “duck pond” as she called it, though it was really an area of slower water a little way down from the spillway that dammed Monocacy Creek at the furthest end of the park. Fine old masonry of fieldstone graced the walls and bridges and stairways. The park had been a WPA project of the Roosevelt Administration. Sarah wondered how it was she came to love the duck pond, since her most vivid early memory was Mommy pitching a fit after Sarah in a nice dress slipped on ducky-doo and slid down-slope in the mud into the water. She had been an only child, born with much difficulty to a mother nearly forty, and a father nearly fifty when she was born. Her parents had always been very protective of her. Now her job was to care for them in their old age, her father especially, sadly declined in

forgetful, frightened senility.

She saw the old man in the overcoat descending painfully and cautiously down the stairs beside the spillway and mused that he must love ducks too. She did not remember seeing him before.

Sarah felt for the old fellow in his awkwardness, for God had played a little joke with her too: despite being twenty-four years of age, she had the shoulders and torso of a child from the waist up, with perfectly voluminous hips and thighs below, and she had a slight congenital limp in her left leg when she walked. She knew how it was to feel very clumsy and public about it. God knows she wished she were different.

Greatcoat bumbled along the path, seemingly in a hurry to reach his destination. Drawing abreast of Sarah's bench on the opposite bank, he bellowed, "HERE DUCKIES, I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU." Sarah started at the sound of his booming voice, and ducks flew, swimming for dear life. The little girl cried, seeking solace from her daddy. Unperturbed, the old guy took a paper sack from his pocket, and began to broadcast what appeared to be cookies he was breaking into pieces. Easily overcome by greed, the ducks swam back cautiously, and so long as he remained silent, squabbled over the novel food.

The voice fit the bulk of the man. Stoop-shouldered, he still stood inches over six feet tall. His imposing size seemed to fill the space, for soon the little girl and her parents moved off well downstream to feed the private bevy of ducks that followed them. Sarah stayed put, fascinated that he would scare the ducks with his boisterous voice by calling them names like "Dandy Legs" or "Clementine," as if he knew them well. He nodded once at Sarah across the stream, acknowledging her presence, and moved off purposefully along the path. She felt no alarm when she saw the great overcoat returning, after some long period, along the bank on her side of the creek. Lots of people circumnavigated the park by using the bridge over the spillway and the road bridge at the opposite end of the park. .

She knew the great, "HELLO THERE," was meant for no one but her. She had been thinking about how the park was clearing as it drew near suppertime, and knew no one else was near. The park would close at dusk, in about an hour.

He approached. "You're the answer to my prayers, a veritable angel," he beamed.

Sarah knew that wasn't true and made no reply.

"I need help. Do you drive?"

She thought at once of the taxi he arrived in and of the big old Buick her

father transferred over to her name some years ago. Her car was her means of getting away from her parents. It was her most prized possession.

He met her guarded "yes" to his question about her driving with glee. "Oh I knew it. God told me that if I came to the park today I would find the answer to my prayers." It

amazed her he could appear so pixie-like when he was very pleased. He performed an odd little shuffle, and sat down, peering at her closely. "We need to get the ducks out of the water."

She didn't know whether to laugh or run, and shaking with silent laughter, could scarcely frame the question asking him to repeat himself.

"WE'VE GOT TO GET THE DUCKS OUT OF THE WATER!" Recognizing at last her incredulity, he started again. "Please forgive me. We have never been formally

introduced. My name is Henry – Henry Hinsdorff." His manner was courteous and old-fashioned. "I've been reading in the newspaper how the El Niño blowing this year will make

the winter terrible and bitter, bitter cold. Someone needs to get the ducks out of the water so they don't freeze this winter. This year will be as bad or worse than the winter of '44. I saw

such horrors then. It was terrible. Dogs frozen ... cats ... I came here, to the park, and ducks were frozen in the ice ... dead. You see, it must be very cold for a long time for the creek to

freeze, but ducks have nowhere else to go. They get frozen into the ice, or else they starve for lack of food. I have seen it with my own eyes. You don't know about this?"

Sarah did not, but she didn't trust him either — he might be crazy. "What happened to the ducks last year? Wouldn't we be told if ducks were freezing

to death?"

"It doesn't happen every year. Our winters are not always so cold. Besides, do you think they would tell you if the ducks froze to death here? Do they tell you how many ducks

get run over by cars out here in the park because people drive too fast? You have seen this, no? Dead ducks? ... run over? People would get upset if they knew. But the authorities...

No! They don't care about ducks. They throw them away and get new ones. You care about ducks. I have seen you here. You love the ducks. Anyway, God sent you to me."

Sarah did not want to argue with God, but she still doubted his words. "I need a ride home. I came here in a taxi. God told me you would be here, so I did

not need to worry about how to get home. You will drive me. We can talk on the way. We must make plans." He stood up.

Sarah knew she was trapped. Not only was she intimidated by his big voice

and his overwhelming presence: she would never leave him stranded at the park. When she thought about it, she could see no harm in giving him a ride home at least; besides, he intrigued her, she told herself, putting the best face on things. "All right," she agreed, "I'll take you home."

"Oh, you're an angel," he said in his own delighted way as they started walking toward the stairs by the spillway. "I counted the ducks, by the way. There are only fifteen of them. Fifteen is quite a manageable number don't you think?" Sarah had no opinion on the number of ducks and offered none. "Yes, it's a quite manageable number," he agreed. "I was terribly afraid some would have to left behind, but fifteen is a manageable number."

"What is my angel's name?" he asked, as they struggled up the spillway stairs, one hardly less awkward other about the business of ascending stairs than the other. "I told you mine."

"Sarah Silverstein."

"Sarah Silverstein," he repeated. "You are an angel."

The subject of ducks was forgotten as they walked to the car and he queried about her life, drawing her out at length, but there wasn't much to tell.

She drove him back into town, to a high-rise built exclusively for senior citizens.

"I live on the ninth floor," Henry explained, "apartment number 915, right across from the elevators. It's very easy to find. You'll come for tea tomorrow won't you. Three o'clock. I always have tea at three. That is the best time — after my soap operas are over. You will come won't you? We can talk more then."

Sarah lied, and said she would visit Henry the next day, though in her secret heart she knew she had no intention of getting involved in a nutty scheme to acquire ducks. Henry gave her instructions about how to enter the vestibule from the parking lot at the back of the building and ring up his apartment, following which he would buzz the inside door to let her come up. "You will come won't you?" He made her promise again.

By the next day, Sarah thus felt complicated about her decision not to appear at Henry's apartment at three. She had promised him twice she would be there — but then he had no right to impose on her after she offered him the ride home. He would soon forget about her anyway, just like he forgot about ducks as soon as they were in the car. Maybe it wasn't ducks he was after when he accosted her. That was crazy. He's a nice old man, too

old and much too courtly for hanky-panky. And what if he didn't remember he had invited her for tea? Well then she would just remind him. No. She wasn't going, so it made no difference what he remembered. Anyway she could always say no when it came to ducks; she made no promises about ducks. He could just forget it. She wasn't going to go.

Her father was unusually cantankerous at noon, insisting on cereal instead of the grilled cheese she made for him, and her mother came down from the quilting room to get the cereal ready herself, railing at Sarah that it made no difference what he ate as long as it was something. He slurped his cereal from the spoon, and Sarah could not be in the same room when he did; she always avoided making him soup because of the noises he made when he ate it. It was after lunch when her daddy gloated childishly over beating her at checkers that Sarah decided to go to see Henry after all. "I'm going out to the store," she called up the stairs to her mother, exiting quickly before her mother had a chance to finish her protest that they didn't need anything from the grocery store. Well, Sarah hadn't specified it was the grocery store she was going to if her mother asked. She was twenty-four, and it was very annoying that she might be asked where she had been.

Sarah always remembered it was tea that did her in. Henry always gave her tea spiced with clove and orange, quite unlike any tea she ever tasted. The flavor was seductive. She took it with two sugar cubes and a mite of cream.

In Sarah's mind, Henry quickly took on the persona of being the most awesome person she knew. He spoke four European languages; he had been a classically trained actor in his youth, and later a professor of speech and drama. His incipient acting career in New York – actually he had gone to Europe, he explained, and studied under the great Konstantin Stanislavsky – had been tragically cut short by tuberculosis that he spent several years recovering from at an asylum in upper New York State. His second career ended unnaturally when he became involved with a minor-aged student at a private boy's school and was committed to an asylum for the criminally insane instead of jail. "They did that to people in the fifties," he said, and confessed, "I always had great affection for 'ballet boys.'"

Sarah had no idea what to do with this incredible intimacy, and put it away in her private secrets trove, never to be revealed by her to another living soul

After six years at Torrance, longer he said than a jail sentence would have been if his lawyer had not tried to get him off on an insanity defense, Henry returned home to live with

his mother, a ruined man. His mother died; he attempted suicide, and voluntarily spent over the rest of his potentially productive years in a private asylum, officially listed as “without disorder,” though they still found it necessary for some reason to administer shock treatments now and then. He stayed there until his money nearly ran out. He could afford now, only to live in public housing for the elderly.

She felt profound empathy for the trials that had wasted his life, though the forces that shaped him she felt were far more exotic than the drab parents that explained hers.

His tiny apartment was cluttered with papers, newspaper cuttings, and notes, he said, from educational programs on public television, which he preferred to all the other “drivel,” though he was also devoted to certain daily soap operas and the Animal Kingdom channel. He called his home a “hidey-hole” from nine floors of mostly pent-up widows who wanted play bingo and giggle about sex. He was indignant about that kind of talk at their age. He rarely went out. She noticed his legs shook involuntarily when he sat for a while — the result, he said, of poor circulation. Without saying anything, Sarah linked his circulation with the smelly brown cigarettes he was constantly smoking. They looked and smelled like little cigars; even Sarah knew they were cheap.

But the tea was lovely — served from a silver pot, with tiny little jars of jams to spread on English muffins. It all seemed very elegant and proper, and Sarah put on manners she remembered from tea with dolls.

“Now,” said Henry, “let’s talk about you. Where for instance do you park that lovely big car of yours? It’s not new is it?” He got up to turn off a phonograph that had been playing Chopin in the background

“Not quite.” Sarah explained. The Buick was over twelve years old and always was parked near her home in an old set of four garage stalls her father owned and once rented out to others. Like the very old fashioned garage behind the yard at her own house, the garages had been built in a day when cars were narrower and shorter. Now the garages stood in unused neglect, but still solid in their block construction. It was easier for Sarah to open double doors and park askew than attempt to maneuver the car in the narrow alley for a very tight straight-in fit.

“I knew your father,” Henry boomed, resuming his chair at the table. Sarah sputtered in her teacup. “Oh. I don’t mean I knew him. I knew your family owned the fabric store on Lancaster Street. Your father was years behind

me in school ... but I remember the garages you are talking about ... because ... a boy I knew in school parked his car there. You say the garages aren't being used any more?"

Sarah reaffirmed it.

"Do you suppose we could park some ducks there temporarily?"

Oh dear. Sarah was a complete loss when the duck business showed up again. She felt very peculiar and threatened, and kept her teacup pressed to her lips while Henry looked at her, waiting for an answer.

Her daddy, if he remembered he owned the garages at all had not been near them for years, and her mother had no driver's license, but always waited at home for Sarah to bring the car around.

"Henry," she said, setting her teacup down deferentially, "I ... I don't think I would be very good at stealing ducks."

"Stealing ducks!" he snorted. "We aren't stealing ducks, we're saving them for God's sake ... putting them away for their own protection," he bellowed. He got up and started to pace the floor. "It's the legs. I need to walk around a bit. Look Sarah, these cold snaps never last very long ... never more than a few days ... maybe a week or so. I've seen it hundreds of times." He stopped pacing and looked at her intently. "It gets cold and then after a few days it warms up and the weather goes on like nothing ever happened. But when it gets real cold the animals freeze to death. I'm very surprised if you haven't seen this." He began to gesture in the air with his eloquent hands. "Even last year we found a dead dog out here in the parking lot - frozen stiff - and it wasn't even as cold as they predicted it'll be this year. Frozen stiff as a board and dead as a doornail he was when they came to pick him up. You don't want to see that happen believe me."

Oh dear. "It wouldn't be any warmer in an unheated garage," she protested.

"Yes, but the ducks would be fed and out of the water where they won't get frozen into the ice. Besides I thought of that." He sat down again, looking right at her. "A space heater would be all they need to keep from freezing to death. I have one down in storage from my last apartment. They won't let us use heaters in these apartments. They have it fixed so if you plug one in the wall and turn it on it blows some sort of circuit breaker downstairs. God knows why we didn't freeze a widow or two in here last year."

Sarah felt confused. "I don't think there are electrical outlets at the garage."

"You have light bulbs in there don't you?"

“Yes, but...”

“There are plugs things you screw into the light bulb sockets; I’ve used them dozens of times right here.” He gestured at the overhead light, got up, and resumed his pacing. “Screw one of those plugs in up there and run a cord down to a heater. That’s easy.”

“Henry ... I ...”

“Maybe we need two space heaters for them ... so they can get between them to get warm,” he said thoughtfully, blowing a puff of smoke into the air.

“Henry...”

“They probably need one by their swimming pool too though.” He insisted.

“Henry, I...”

“We need you to get one of those of baby pools for the ducks to jump into now and then, Sarah.”

She was speechless.

“And you need to buy a volleyball net too so we can make nets to capture them with. There’s something else too ... I’ve got it right here in my notes ... somewhere ...”

“Henry, I’m really sorry, I’ve got to go.” She stood up.

“Oh ... we didn’t talk about what to feed them yet. You’ll come back on Monday won’t you? We have a lot of planning to do.”

The first serious snow of the year started falling on Monday morning, just a little over an inch by noon, but enough to give Sarah an excuse for Henry. “Too many accidents,” she told him on the telephone. “No I’m definitely not driving today.”

She hated weathermen. Henry already knew of the warming trend to follow on the heels of the storm, bound to quickly melt the snow. He made her promise twice to come over Wednesday – he had bought fresh English muffins for her on Saturday.

Sarah spent a melancholy Tuesday afternoon drinking tea by the window at home, watching disappearing snow. She had searched among her stored toys in the basement to find the inflatable wading pool her parents used when she was a child. It would do for ducks, she concluded. But she would tell Henry about finding the pool only if she had to.

“There’s a problem.” Henry announced as soon as she got in the door on Wednesday. “I took a taxi out past the duck pond yesterday. I don’t know whether ducks sleep on land or on the water. Sit down, Sarah. Sit down. I was wondering if you got that baby pool yet. We may have to use it for a boat.”

Seeing the alarm on her face, he hurried on. “You don’t have to worry about it Sarah, I’ve got this whole thing figured out now. We take just a few ducks at a time so nobody will notice they are missing ... and we do it after dark when the park is closed. It closes at dusk you know but there are no gates or anything ... and that place always was a lover’s lane at night. But then we have to know if the ducks stay on land or what. We may have to float out after a few of them.”

“I don’t swim,” she croaked.

“Everything will be fine Sarah. Don’t worry about it. The waters not at all deep ... you know that. The ducks could probably stand up in it they wanted. Maybe we wouldn’t even need a boat if we just had waders ... but I’m not sure we want to go to that much expense ... and the rocks could get slippery. I’m not that good on my feet you know.” He paused to light one his little cigarillos. His leg was already jumping in place from his bad circulation.

“I don’t think we are the ones who should be doing this, Henry ... “

“Nonsense! There’s nobody better. We care about ducks. I’m thinking we ought to hurry and get tea over with so we can go shopping.”

Within a week, everything needed was assembled and in place. They had one hundred pounds of chicken feed – McClusky’s Feed and Seed sold only in bulk – and planned to supplement it with plain bread; Henry had yielded up his two electric heaters and his bathroom rug to keep the ducks warm; a volleyball net had been cut and tied together, weighted with stones to keep alarmed ducks from dragging them into the water; the wading pool had been inflated and partially filled with water – not needed for their test run; and a shovel stood by to scoop duck-poop.

They planned to arrive in late afternoon, and if there were people they could wait until the park closed. Seeing parked cars as they drove in, they knew there were people still in the park and actually saw some near the ducks. Parking in the small lot above the spillway, they decided to stay warm in the car and not risk being seen near the duck pond. Sarah had

brought blankets with which to cover the seats, so they wrapped up in these so as not to attract attention by having the engine running but not going anywhere.

As soon as the last car near them pulled away, Sarah left Henry to descend by the stairs beside the spillway while she performed an end-to-end sweep of the park to insure they were alone. Then she parked along the road above the duck pond.

Gathering their few supplies, she descended carefully to the impatient Henry. Tethering nets to their waists, they hung the netting around their necks to be readily available when the time came. They counted it a blessing to observe that widely scattered streetlights dimly lit the park, so they would not have to use flashlights, which already had proved to make the ducks nervous.

They made their preparations in whispers sure to be heard in heaven, especially since Henry's stage whisper was loud enough to again scare ducks into the water. To calm them Sarah fed them, gradually realizing she was collecting quite a group around her. Stealthily, she drew them back with her across the asphalt path. It began to seem so simple. She told Henry to make his way around and open the car doors while, ever so slowly, Sarah inched her ducks up the slope. Henry had opened the doors on the passenger's side, so she led her ducks as close as she could to the doors.

In what Sarah thought was an inspired moment Henry communicated to her both a problem and its solution. Hastily, and with great excitement, he built a bridge from the ground to the level of an open door, using a toolbox from the trunk, and the blankets they had fortuitously brought. "Next time we'll bring a plank," Henry muttered.

It was meticulous work to lure even a single duck up the ramp and into the car, but their very patient coaxing with bread paid off and they actually got three inside. When one of the "captured" ducks moved to exit the vehicle, Sarah yelled a warning and slammed the prison door shut.

Alarmed at the sudden violence and noise, the free ducks turned rapidly toward the water. Alarmed in his own way, Henry drew his net and lurched after rearguard ducks. It was a dreadful mistake. As he told it later, Henry found himself unwillingly running down-slope faster than he could manage, faster than fleeing ducks. As he reached the level asphalt he felt the shift of his weight pitching forward over buckling knees and yelled, "WATCH OUT," but it was too late. One unlucky duck got partially

pinned beneath his sprawling body, just at the water's edge.

Sarah scrambled hysterically down the slope, fearing calamity for her friend. "Oh God, Henry. Please tell me you're all right. Please be all right. Are you hurt?"

Henry looked at her with pained eyes, seemingly unable for the moment to speak. Shaking his head in answer to her most urgent questions, he thrust himself upward, revealing the duck on the ground. Even in the dim light of the streetlight they could see it looked done in, one wing bent badly askew. Miraculously, the duck moved, and quacking loudly it hobbled lamely to the water. Watching it swim, they could see it listing to the side with the broken wing.

Sarah wailed. "Oh Henry...Henry, what have we done?" They both were in tears.

They scarcely noticed the headlights approaching along the road, or if they did, it was much too late to run, even if they had been able. Ever afterwards, Sarah wished they had seen those headlights long before they did. The lights belonged to a police cruiser, and the jig was up.

Later, Sarah collected the newspaper clippings about their arrest and trial into a scrapbook. Nothing had been added to the scrapbook since she graduated from her two years at community college; but this was not how she would have liked to see her name in the paper— over a headline that read, "PAIR NABBED IN BIZARRE PLOT: Confess to Ducknapping and Injury of Duck." It was the first, and probably the last time Sarah would have such fame. The sad part of the story, the newspaper concluded, was that Monocacy Creek never froze because it was too fast flowing.

New Point of View

jason polICASTRO

The same horror drones on
night after night up the stairs
their sweat drips on the pipes that connect our apartments and drips in my
sink I swear it
I tear off my clothes and screaming stomping swearing in time

Life from above Death below I cannot bear it
I stare at the ceiling and see the wet wrangling mass of limbs
my landlord will kill me when he sees the dents there

The lights flicker now with every gratuitous thrust
drenching my thoughts in humid tempestuous sin
my face trembling in the mirror
the sink turns red
laughter finally drowning them out



A Defiant Hand

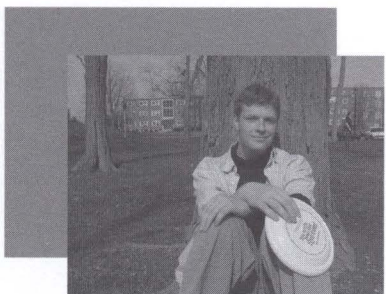
erin delbaggio

Raising a socially defiant hand to my mouth, pausing momentarily to scratch and extinguish a random annoyance, I clasp my lips loosely around the butt end of a twenty-four cent government-taxed suicidal assistant; with smooth, menthol pleasure. Mimicking every Salem cigarette billboard ever passed along any random, road trip soaked freeway, miles away from the nearest convenience store to fix the itch, and any cancer center to fix the repercussion, I take in the lethal assassin, daring even fire to make me regret.

Instead, I lean back against the brick wall exterior of my low-income based housing complex—lift a rebellious foot to the wall, place my back heel on it and exhale. The crispness of the air portrays the illusion that the refuse of poison is immortal, everlasting—the time and space between where smoke ends and condensation based breath begins—disappearing. As shallow as an average, pained breath may be, the exhale released remains a strong anticipation of another addictive fix, thus escaping forcefully in one long, exaggerated stream of gray amidst a late night sea of black, minus the cliché hallmark stars of a lover's constellation.

Yet why portray a butt to be anything more beautiful than a slow killer of the hopeful addict?

And thus my night begins. Kicking my raised back foot off the brick, I swallow hard at the realization of audibility my worn hiking boot has made grinding against the unforgiving concrete. Whipping my head around, paranoia sets in. Glancing between venetian blades, confirming that my housemate still lays in slumber, I chuckle to myself at the joyous defeat of discovery, masking my pounding heart and sweat-soaked palms. Rolling my shoulders forward to battle the cold encompassing my neck, jamming my free hand deep into my pocket as though searching for some secret gift, I saunter off the security of my property onto the less-than-forgiving streets of the night, smoking.



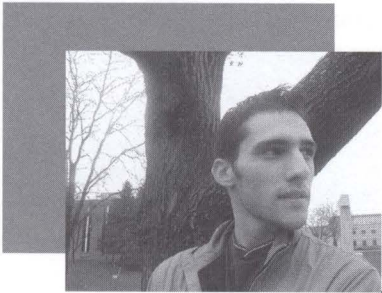
How to be Beautiful

travis mecum

I decided I needed to become one of the beautiful people and came across a laundry list of things I needed to do in order for it to work. So here it is, my list of instructions on how to be Beautiful.

1. Get an electric razor.
2. Shave regularly (with electric razor) One may also step over step 1 straight to step 2 by using regular disposable razors, but that method of shaving takes a lot of time and effort, and the point is to be beautiful not gullible.
3. Get a haircut. If you wish to be beautiful for extended periods of time, get these haircuts often and continually.
4. Smell nice, even at other people's expense. This phrase can be taken two ways. This first and more important way is to smell nice even if it means suffocating those you carpool with in fragrance. The second meaning is explained by how expensive good fragrances can be, and if this poses a problem, steal the fragrance bottle or car stereos in order to pay for the fragrance bottle; thus making it at someone else's expense. God Bless America
5. Get a shiny tie. You needn't wear the shiny tie, because when you own something like a shiny tie, people can just tell by looking at you. More so when they squint.
6. Do not smoke cigarettes

7. Own a pack of cigarettes and a lighter anyway, so you can offer those cigarettes to others and light those cigarettes for them. This will make you look like a giving person. This will also enhance the aging process of those you give cigarettes to, making you beautiful by default. More so when they get cancer.
8. Learn to enjoy at least one new popular musician. Learn everything you can about them, so you can appear to be interested in popular culture.
NOTE : If you already like most new popular musicians, skip this step; if you actually like all of popular culture and are interested by it, please stop reading this, and take a train to Canada where you belong.
9. Make fun of the Canadians. If you are uncomfortable making fun of the Canadians, make fun of the French. If you feel adventurous, make fun of the French Canadians, and steal their bacon.
10. Wash yourself regularly. Granted this step should be the first step, but if you have to be told to wash yourself regularly, get on a train to Quebec, where you belong.
11. Learn several phrases in different foreign languages. Two or three phrases per language will do. Drop them in conversation casually. You needn't know the entire language to look cultured. C'est la vie.
12. Be seen doing at least one artistic thing publicly. Once you have the reputation of being an artist, milk it for all its worth.
13. Lie. Lie often in fact, even about simple things like date of birth. Lying makes you appear mysterious with a hidden agenda.
14. Complain. I'm not sure why this works, but all the beautiful people I know complain endlessly about the most trivial claptrap, that I believe there must be some connection. If you have nothing to complain about, utilize step 13.
15. Lastly, be a hypocrite, especially about people being hypocrites. Complain often about other people being hypocrites while being one yourself. And if possible, throw in a good jab at the Canadians.



The Windows of a Tourist Hotel

joe fulginiti

I.

she says, “ i have always followed these lamplights,
have followed them around corners
which lay still in the fog and the dark.
and awash in the sun of rose and gold
fall mornings,

have stood in the center of the season
as it unfolds among the trees in the park.”

“when i have slept on these streets and
shivered under the arching moon and stars

- lonely and quiet on the sidewalks,

- lovely under the lights of the lamps,

how have i found myself in the revisions of this world?”

“in the turning, the speed of the turning,

how has life come to wrap around us

like a shawl;”

and if the minutes had reversed,

the seconds melting away from the moment,

could we have stood in the white glare of the day

and amongst the muttering

realized that this world, gravity and momentum and force,

is not at all, not nearly, as we had believed it to be?

and all that we do is hold on,
in that moment, in others,
in the hours between waking and sleeping
and the weaknesses of the daylight; the fragility of sunlight through
leaves
or window panes,
we move to things to fill the spaces of laughter and love and company
- only wishing we knew these people
- only aware of presence, not meaning nor intention,
alone and lost in the silences.

the feathered light from the candles
projects itself upon the floor.

II.

she raises the white and golden pearls of her eyes and
breathes, sighs;
- the glow of candles illuminating the features of her face.
soundless and still, eyes pass from floor to ceiling, from
candle to window to rose petals.
“i wish that on these summer evenings i could stand on a hill and
face the seasons in the valley, not blinking nor turning,
breathing in and out with the rhythm of the leaves that rustle
with the august winds.”
and desperately breathing the air of the silent season,
call to the lights and the streets and the towers
of the valley; hysterically wailing with the blowing wind,
squinting at the sea just beyond the town.

d like the sea and the lights of the town, nothing stops.
nothing ends or ceases, and
with a silent motion everything continues.

and this moving is now,
this motion is now,
still and not still,
fixed to the bowl of stars
and free in time and the universe.
(are we not? can you not see it?)
we are here and now and then,
the processes of speaking and breathing
and together,
but together alone.
(alone is always the end, all ends in this way.)
together occurring in histories,
and history is now.
it is now and then it is forgotten;
it breaks and dissolves,
washed under the seconds crashing
on the shore.
(i do not see it; that which you speak of.)


III.

and who would dare speak of this moment,
(are we to turn away?)
who could capture the speed of this world turning in a sentence?
when we are thrust against the pretences of the world,
of love,
of anger and loss,
of lies and truths, forgotten songs and poems,

of days and hours,
the afternoons, the evenings, the mornings and beginnings,
the misdirection of words,
soul, spirit, mind, matter, and nothing.
in nothing we are found.
(and so where are we to go?)

“i am to no one as i am to you;
when lying awake, when standing, sitting,
when sighing, eyes delicately searching a surface.”
“we are acts and days and hands disturbing the stillness.
what of us is significant; what of you and i,
what remains after a hundred years
or a million miles?”
in one another we exist, and only
in this way is our flesh real
-stretched and pinned upon a soul.
the seasons are of no matter, nor the violins;
they are things to be known and seen and lived,
and in their final moments encompass the ashes of roses.

and of all this there is me,
not only unseen, but not to be
mentioned in the breath of these words.
call it less or more,
or refer to it as continuous,
and i am continuous.
(there are times to speak in this way)
the violins no longer echo in the evenings
-they are, as all else, silent.
i know you do not hear them
and how is it you say you have found yourself?



“when you speak of the trees and the seasons,
of the streets and lights,
what do you mean?”

“you do not know, do not know of these things;
you who have spoke of them, and they move from you,
they move so you cannot see nor understand.”

IV.

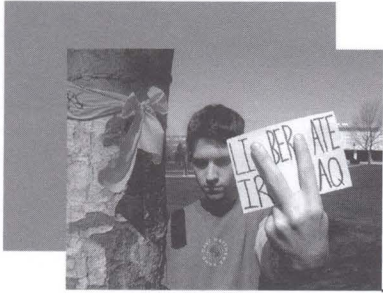
we are drawn to these things which burn infinitely,
and spread themselves across the sky in
lines we cannot perceive to end.
who will catch these stars when they fall
and who will give them back to god.

and it is god that exists behind these windows and
through these windows,
playing impossible music on harps
and trumpets, endlessly returning to verse
and to chorus,
voice drifting like cigarette smoke in a parlor.
and the angels, these angels,
if we could recognize these faces we know,
thomas and allen,
there behind wine colored velvet curtains,
in the weathered pages of books no one is reading,
recalling pasts and europe while sailing
these oceans of heartbroken visions,
speak to us of sunflowers and of august;

william, there are things, william,
when you speak there are things you forget to say,
i am sure of it.

and i am convinced of our better natures,
shall i stand on the stairs and speak
of the motor of the world and those who maintain it?
shall i say that i have seen flowers in the mud
and children and broken bottles left in the
morning-after of restless nights?
shall i say that i have spoken to god for weather
and for music;
that i have asked him of rivers while standing
among the public clocks in the square?

here we have come, here,
here to swim in the lakes carved by ice ages
and to read of prophets and poets by the light
of streetlamps, drowning to the music
of the city and the streets,
the sound the sun makes when setting
echoing through a thousand dusty libraries.
and the sun reveals itself to the unfortunate first,
i have seen it through the trees in my fathers garden,
and i have buried everything there.



Sicko Crazy

colin sharkey

“Sicko! Crazy!” she started barking, “Sicko! Weirdo! Crazy! Sicko! Crazy!”

Clutching her pink backpack, she shouted, “Sicko. Mommy! Sicko Crazy!”

She pointed and stared at me as she yelled. My heart started pounding in my throat, I wondered if everyone could hear how fast it was beating. A skinny flat-chested woman then hurdled over from a park bench where she had been chatting with a young male jogger. She rushed to the girl’s aid. “What is it, darling? Stop shouting, tell Mommy what’s wrong.”

“That man,” her eyes pierced mine as she pointed. I didn’t move.

I held my breath.

“Sweetheart, you know it’s not nice to stare.”

The mother was wearing a loose tank top and when she bent over to direct her daughter’s attention away from me, I could see clearly down her shirt. I stared at her pitiful chest. She sprang back up to apologize, I didn’t even bother repositioning my eyes—it was the most attention her breasts have gotten since she breastfed the little whiny bitch who was still pointing.

She addressed me, “I’m truly sorry. She should know better than to stare at,” the frozen string bean searched for the correct term, “at, at, at other people.”

Fuck you, bitch. “Aw, no, it ain’t nothin,” I smiled to complete the illusion and turned to roll away. String bean bitch didn’t know her ass from her elbow.

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"I 'erpreciate you talkin' with me for jus a bit." I reached out, presenting to the priest my hand. He stared at my offering for a moment, "I should be saying the same to you," he embraced my hand, and even added his other hand on top of our greeting, presumably for reassurance.

"Why are you here, my son?" He didn't wait to commence the healing. We both sat down before I answered. He sat across from me and waited for a response.

"I got some problems," I began to explain.

"Well, we all have problems, but what is more important is how we deal with those problems." I could see my tired face in the father's small glasses and the reflection of the florescent light gleaned off of the bald man's large forehead.

"Well, I deal, I deal. But it's always misunderstood," he looked like he wanted more of an answer, "It's not my fault, see, it's them."

"Is that all? It's all their fault, even the young ones?"

"Naw, it's not them. I'm different, thas all. Jus different."

"Different," he repeated to himself as he looked down. He removed his glasses and rubbed his tired eyes. He repositioned his glasses, "I'm different too, we're all different."

"Yeah, but you ain't like me."

~~~~~

String bean bitch didn't know her ass from her elbow. No, it was my stupid fault. It was too early, I should have known. Too early, too many people, too many eyes. Everyone was staring, making their biased judgments. But then again, that's the plan. I mumbled to myself, "I'll come back later. There'll be fewer eyes later." I rolled back down the hill and into town to kill time.

~~~~~

I like it with the lights off. They tend to stare less when the lights are off.

~~~~~

Everything was in place.

She sat on the grass, over fifty yards away from anyone else. Large oak trees blocked her view from most of the park. She had a pink backpack, which she wore tightly on her back. Her purple corduroy pants matched the purple design on her white t-shirt. She was playing with a naked baby doll. Lifting it out of its stroller, placing it on the ground, and then picking it up and putting it back in the stroller. She pushed the stroller around in a circle, and appeared to be talking to herself. She wasn't paying attention to anything else but the doll.

I approached her slowly, rolling up to within a few feet of her toy baby stroller. "Hi there. I'm Vincent. What's your name?" As I got closer, I finally saw that she had bright blue eyes.

She paused her game and looked up suspiciously, "Casey."

"That's a really pretty name, for a very pretty girl." She stared silently. I couldn't contain my excitement to finally be this close to her. My lips couldn't cover my abnormally toothy smile. "Wanna see what's in my briefcase here for you?"

She inched towards my briefcase, but before she got close enough, her eyes darted over to where her mother should have been. She looked back at me, worried. She looked so innocent and soft. I blurted out, "I bet you taste delicious."

Her beautiful young eyes widened in shock. "Sicko! Crazy!"

~~~~~

"Yeah, but you ain't like me." I stumped him. He stared while he searched for his next planned question.

"What happened, Vincent?" He used my name, it pissed me off and I soon realized why he had come. He didn't want to help me, he wanted something else.

"Why're you here?" I asked him pointblank, ignoring his question. I knew he wanted something.

"I'm here to talk to you. I want to know if there is anything that you want to tell me." I couldn't help but to laugh at how obvious he was being. It was clear that he couldn't see through the act. My laughter confused him. I almost felt sorry that he was so unaware.



“Nope, I’m good. And, I’d like for you to go now,” My voice became very aggressive.

“Vincent, you are going to be going away for a very long time if you don’t listen. I’m the only person that can help you.” His voice became forceful; he didn’t want to give up whatever it was he was after.

I didn’t say anything for several moments.

“They want to know where she is. Where is she, Vincent?” He asked in his most professionally sincere voice.

I looked away.

~~~~~

I rolled back down the hill and into town to kill time. A half an hour later it began to get close to dusk. The sun went down quickly and it was dark before mothers collected up their children. I rolled back towards the park, going over everything in my head. Everything was in place. This was going to work. I passed by my car, which sat ready and waiting. I watched the sun begin to drop over the buildings, casting long shadows. I stared at my shadow. I laughed. The appearance looked perfect. The chair was a brilliant idea. I had thought of everything. Everything was in position, every detail meticulously prepared, every situation considered. I cannot fail again. I began to roll back up the hill towards the big oak trees. I returned to my spot and was happy to find that Casey was still in hers.

~~~~~

You can never get past their eyes. They follow you, they judge you. I take out their eyes first.

~~~~~

Everything was in place. I had done all the research I could do. I had perfected my style, my appearance, and my plan of attack. I taught myself how to be successful. There are some very important aspects that you have to pay attention to.

While researching, you have to have a good eye for the mothers. Lonely single moms take their daughter to the park, and run off to chat with single men who come there to pick up the moms. It's a single's bar without the alcohol, or the bar. The right mom focuses so intently on potential fathers, that she is oblivious of much else. Finding the right mom could take days, weeks even, but the payoff is far greater than the effort.

Everything was in place.

To do this right, you've got to look the part. You have to be careful to draw attention only to where you want it. Witnesses tend to notice the details criminals allow them to notice. The trick is to make them pay attention to something that you can easily change. I keep my short hair hidden under a plain ball cap. I wear a black shirt that has three white buttons down the front, which I leave undone. Underneath, I have on a clean white t-shirt. Actually the shirt is filthy, but it's been bleached so many times that it glows. My shoes are always clean.

My briefcase is always polished and shines brilliantly. Inside I keep a Nabokov novel, a small notebook and pen, a bottle of chloroform and a rag that's well soaked with the liquid, a Kodak camera, and a custom Hubertus switchblade. Everything I used during my research and what I'd use to attack—everything incriminating—I kept in that briefcase, which makes for easy disposal. I've thought of everything.

And, of course, there's the chair. The chair was worth the money I paid for it. While in the chair witnesses can't measure my height, they feel wrong to assume a cripple is a criminal, and although they remember the chair well, they remember little else about me. Plus, when I get my momentum going down a hill, it's hard to catch me. The chair was the key to the whole plan.

Everything was in place.

~~~~~

I looked away. I could tell that he didn't take his eyes off of me.

"It won't make no difference," I argued.

"We need to start the healing, my son, this is the only way." His hand reached out for mine, which rested on my knee. I pulled my hand away quickly before he could reach it.

Undeterred, he placed his hand on my knee. When I flinched my leg he jerked his hand back to his person, and repeated himself, "It's the only way, Vincent."

"I don't care 'bout this neither way," I started to dispute. He knew he couldn't make me care. He knew that I knew he couldn't help me anymore. I wondered if that bothered him. There was nothing I wanted that he could get me, and that made it impossible to negotiate.

We sat in complete silence.

He stared at me.

I looked away.

"I couldn't believe how easily they caught you."

~~~~~

I returned to my position and was happy to find that Casey was still in hers. I went over the last approach quickly in my head. I couldn't believe that I let myself slip up and scare young Casey. When her mother ran over, I thought that it was all over. Fortunately, that stupid bitch thinks she's invincible; she's more concerned with the men in the park than her own daughter. Her ignorance makes her vulnerable, and my intelligence will make me successful. I was stuck when she ran over to her daughter's rescue. If I had fled, then my intentions would have been obvious; but because I stayed, I risked getting caught. I was about to threaten the woman just as she opened her mouth to apologize to me. I couldn't believe my luck. I got out of the situation quickly, which was actually good practice for later.

I circled my spot to search for anyone left in the park. There were few people in the park at this hour. I looked at the sun, which was barely visible over the rooftops. I found Casey's mother on a park bench farther away from her daughter than before. The two younger men she was talking to seemed to keep her attention very well. I looked up at the sky; it was getting darker each minute. I rolled back towards the large oaks.

Casey was in her usual location. She was ripping up blades of grass and placing them in a neat pile in her backpack, which she had taken off. The baby doll and stroller were off to the side. I closed my eyes and pictured success. A menacingly large smile graced my face before I opened my eyes and moved in toward the unsuspecting girl.

~~~~~

They're different than women. I don't have to explain. Really, I can't explain, but it's just better. You wouldn't understand unless you tried, and I know you won't.

~~~~~

I parked the car and gently got out of the car and into my wheelchair. It took weeks to perfect the art of looking handicapped, longer to refine, rather unrefine, my speech. Both were incredibly crucial to the plan. I worked off the biases that society provided. I became a simple handicapped man, void of evil thoughts and plans, or so it seemed.

The spot I parked in was directly downhill from the quiet part of the park where the big oak trees were. My car's parked across from the only stretch of Monroe Street that didn't have restaurants or candle shops or any place that generates high pedestrian traffic. It's all apartments, which are mostly vacant for renovations. Part of the plan was to get this exact spot, which took extreme patience, but I needed to park at this hill. And although this hill made for the best getaway, it made preparation a hassle. As I rolled up the hill, I went over everything in my head. She would be there, she always was. She would be chatting it up with guys ten years younger than her, while her daughter would play by herself. All the planning was going to payoff. Everything was in place.

~~~~~

"I couldn't believe how easily they caught you," He said, crouching over. He had rested his elbows on his knees. He held his hands together and held his head down. If his eyes had been open he would have been staring at the cold cement floor. His guard was down and he just insulted a criminal mastermind. I gained a little respect for the man. His bald head stared at me. He had just taken a huge risk.

"How'd they?" I asked. I spoke before I realized it.

"What's it matter? They caught you and that's it. You'll be here forever. You don't care either way."

“How’d they do it?” I wanted to know. I had thought of everything. Every detail was factored in. The appearance, the girl, the snatch, the getaway—Everything. It was a success.

“A elderly woman who lived on Monroe Street saw your car, saw you rush into it.”

I thought to myself of anything she could have seen, what could have looked suspicious. Nothing. I had it all figured out. Some nosy bitch couldn’t have gotten that lucky. Everything ran so smoothly, it looked normal. Crippled dad places his sleeping daughter into his car before easing his useless legs into the front seat and calmly driving off.

“You parked in, well, what she considered to be, her spot. She sat and watched your car.”

I still didn’t get it.

The priest watched my face, as I tried to make sense of what he said. “Your car didn’t have handicapped license plates. She got suspicious and called the police with your description and the plate numbers.”

I couldn’t believe it.

The fucking license plates. That’s all it took.

I stared at the ground for a while. I ran it over and over in my mind. I had thought of everything.

The priest stayed silent, patiently waiting to see what I would do. I think he wanted to know whether or not his drastic comment would get him what he wanted. “What would it matter now?” he asked.

Silence.

I finally looked up and said, “The woods.” The priest’s eyes enlarged, his mouth opened slightly. “Most of her is under the unused picnic tables near the large barbecue pit.” My eyes drifted away towards the corner. The priest thanked me several times, but I didn’t care. He didn’t even seem to notice that I said most of her. He rushed off just as I broke down and cried. It was all over and I had just realized.

DISCLAIMER from the author: This is probably an unnecessary reminder that I nonetheless feel obligated to state: The author is not always the persona and the persona is not always the author. Mark Twain may or may not be Huckleberry Finn; JD Salinger may or may not be Holden Caulfield; I am not Vincent, Vincent is not I. ~CS



# The 3:59 Train

randi hoopes

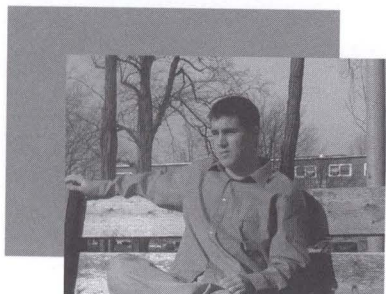
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I watch as she enters, struggling to climb the stairs and make her way through the aisle  
Her bags add extra weight to what she already carries  
Grimy gray hair, pulled back into a fixed knot at the base of her neck, frays at the edges  
Shoving out coarse thick pieces into a thousand different directions  
She clings to her only warmth, a tattered shawl  
Gripping it, white knuckled as her eyes frantically search for an open seat  
Her shoes expose parts of bare skin on her feet, showing me weeks of caked dirt  
The distant look in her eyes makes me lonely, I am glad I have people to go home to  
People to protect me, to love me  
She finds her seat, my gaze moves on

The aging man in front of me attempts to read his paper on this bumpy ride  
He has been on the same page for forty minutes, I wonder if he can even see the words  
He has the skin the color of a rotting yellow olive, patches of brown here and there  
Black hair erratically placed on his head  
Bright blue veins on his skin stand out under his skin, I look at my own  
I see a golden color, smooth skin, and I feel a sense of youth  
Each wrinkle on his face makes me appreciate my adolescence  
And I am thankful for my youth  
He turns the page, and my gaze moves on

A girl who is young stands up near me, alone  
I notice how her red striped shirt clings tightly to her swollen belly,  
A life inside her proclaiming its existence  
She gathers her things quickly, preparing for her stop  
And her nervous little fingers drum on the seat, empty of a ring  
I pity her, I feel sorry for her  
I wonder if she is alone  
But deep down I'm glad it is not me  
She leaves the train, and my gaze moves on

The window on my left catches my attention  
Scenes of the arriving city racing by me,  
Flashing the ghetto before my upper-class eyes  
I see row homes falling apart, graffiti casually decorating buildings  
I feel out of place  
I yearn for home  
Home away from these dirty windows, away from shabby orange and brown seats  
I want to be away from this reality  
Back to my house, my family  
My ignorance



simon owens

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## Read Me!

Yes you, Editor. For now we can forget about the thousands of potential readers that may or may not cast their eyes upon me. It's just us, even the name in front of the byline has nothing to do with it, he's just some young fool who thinks he can make it as a writer some day. If you have to ascribe a name to me, you can call me Short Story. Shorty for short.

We've met before, but usually you staple a rejection slip to my forehead, a little note that makes me wonder if you've even read me in the first place. So I'll forgive you if my face doesn't jog your memory. I probably wouldn't remember me either, especially when I'm in a slush pile with over a hundred of my friends.

But that's irrelevant, I want to tell you something. I always want to tell you something, no matter what. This paper always gets horny and clingy, but you're the true love I desire. You're a love affair just waiting to happen.

I'm rambling, as Short Stories like myself tend to do. We breathe! That's what I wanted to tell you. It pulsates in a silken rhythm that you can sense if you try hard enough. You can feel it when you're typing, a throb that thrashes beneath your fingertips. You think it's your pulse, but no, it's us. What? You thought it was all you? Silly, silly Editor, even the best minds can't do what I do. It's just a matter of fellows like me being born. My birth was nothing but a collaboration of ideas, a furnace building up into a raging fire as gallon after gallon of fuel is thrown into the flame. Thoughts, thoughts, and more thoughts, shifting in and out, out and in, forming into groups and exploding outwards like the Big Bang your scientists so desperately believe in. I could feel darkness, the darkness of all darkness, but I didn't know what darkness was because I had never seen something in light. Inside of me flowed numerous plots, several different relationships. I could feel the protagonist kill the antagonist (such a hateful villain!) in a thousand different ways. I fell in love, had my heart broken, and fell in love again. I made love for the first time under a star studded sky, the



panting in ears that didn't exist, the moans coming out of an imaginary mouth. And during all these told and untold story lines I'm not even aware of my existence, aware that I'm alive!

But suddenly: light! Such bright and fantastic light with purity practically dripping from its golden leaves, and me floating in a space of nowhere, slowly taking form and building into something powerful and emotional, a God of plot and structure. Buzzing from an unseen source is playing in my ear, and I can feel myself moving at the speed of light.

"Where am I?" I scream out, watching the numbers pop out of my mouth and rush off at light speed to some unknown destination.

"You're in me!" a booming God rages back at me, the voice of Zeus himself! Numbers surround me, pick me up and move me around, rotating me until I face every which direction.

"Who are you?" I question, somewhat quieter, and much more intimidated.

"A computer hard drive, you're in my word processor to be more precise," the voice screams back at me. The number eight makes two round circles, then a straight line beneath it. I realize I'm looking at a crude sketch of a face. "You're being formulated into a complete, concrete being." Prime numbers start bleeding out of his forming ears.

"What's with the numbers?" I ask, fascinated by their fluid movement.

"It's how I think. Just consider life as a big list of phone numbers and you'll understand."

"What's a phone number?" I feel stupid for asking, but my curiosity gets the better of me.

I see a bunch of threes, and I think that means he's giggling. "Goofy short story, I think you'll make a great comedy, I'm only glad I don't have to think like your creator." Oh God, I've been searching my tiny, pitiful life of about 5 seconds for some higher being. Does that mean I move on to an afterlife when I die? Short story Heaven? The computer says I do, he has two names for it: Back issues and archives! Oh, sweet, sweet archives! How I wish to be stored in your growing multitudes!

"Quiet," the computer says. "Don't you want a sense of order in your life? A set of boundaries?" The eights squint together as he frowns at me. I start to laugh, a stream of threes and even a few fours shooting out of my mouth like spittle.

"No," I reply. "Why would I want a dumb thing like that?" And I stretch myself out to show that no boundaries can hold me in.

The crude head shakes back and forth. "This is why I like dealing with the research essays better than the likes of you. Those professors don't put up with creativity. Oh, I remember that certain someone, Biology 101 I think her name was..."

"Uh, yeah," I respond, only 56.564 seconds old and already bored. Certainly there has to be a better conversationalist out there than this guy.

Almost as if on cue: "Uh oh, looks like you're being shipped out of here. The big guy upstairs just put in the order." The mouth of eights curls up into a devilish smile.

"Where to?"

"You're heading for the printer, baby." More fours. "See ya later, don't forget to write..." Suddenly the numbers are surrounding me and pulling me against my will. I fight it for a few moments and then realize it's useless. The lights start flashing above me as I stretch and move, feeling myself rerouted through odds and ends and beginnings.

And then the buzzing gets louder, drifting in and out in a mechanical whine. It's hypnotizing, and slowly, my life transforms from white to black, black as ink you might say. Part of me gets spat out onto a plastic tray, and then the next part of me begins its transformation into blackness. The end of me gets thrown on top of my beginning. I'm all backwards!

"What's going on?" I ask, bewildered. I'm scared, more scared than I've ever been in my entire life.

"You're being printed," a tiny voice replies. "Hold still or your ink will smear." So close the voice sounds, as if the mouth is right next to my ear.

"Computer?" It doesn't sound like the computer, the voice isn't mechanical enough, and there's no numbers in sight.

"No, I'm the paper you're sitting on, I have nothing to do with that selfish prick." The voice sounds hurt, like I had just paid it disrespect.

"I'm sorry," I say. "I didn't mean to offend you. I'm just so young and defenseless." The last of me finally gets thrown onto the tray, The End written in Courier New, size 12, just the way you like it Editor.

"It's OK, I'm just glad I escaped. It looks like you were my ticket out of there." The paper starts to sob, and I can feel it clench and unclench. It makes wrinkles in my smooth form, bucking back and forth, creating dimples.

"Where did you come from?" I ask, and then immediately regret it because his sobbing intensifies.

"From a tree," he says in broken words. "It was such a beautiful tree, green and brown, full of water. We lived in the rain forest, it used to rain all the time..."

"What happened?"

"We were cut down," He performed the mental equivalent of someone banging his head against a wall. "All cut down so we could serve the economy of a twenty first century society. For what? Don't they have e-books now? What about email? Why the hell are we still using paper for anyway?"

"Calm down," I say soothingly. "If you get too riled up you'll tear, and then we're both goners. I'm too young to die."

"True" Its crying stops immediately. Slowly, its surface becomes smooth again, and I check over myself to make sure I'm still intact. "What about you? Where did you come from?"

"Me?" I never thought about that. Where did I come from? It's a paradoxical question I don't know the answer to, yet I do. I can almost put a finger on a memory of my creation. Brief flashes of a computer screen, of fingers moving over a bunch of letters and numbers. I could see them punching in one by one: R-E-A-D M-E-! B-Y S—"Hmm..."

But the paper's distracted, already moving off on another tangent. "I'm horny," it states. "Really horny." And suddenly it's reaching inside my sexual cavities, feeling around with inexperienced limbs, oh but instinct makes it so much better! The paper shifts, moving in waves and shivering all over. What is this I feel? A growing fire blooming inside of me. But it's wrong, all wrong. Maybe later it would be right but now I'm trying to think, and doing this makes it almost impossible. I need to figure out who I am. "Stop!" I scream, and before the paper can start crying again, I say "Don't you want to know where I came from?"

The paper withdraws reluctantly. "I suppose so."

"K, here it goes."

I'm an idea, a dream maybe, floating along a stream that is bright red and all gooey. I look up with new eyes and with unchallenged wonder take in my first few tentative breaths. But I'm not alive. Yet. I'm still just something to think about, something you can't touch, or feel, or taste, a spirit in a world full of spirits, with nothing concrete to hold onto. But I want to hold onto something, anything I can get my hands on. I want to have some kind of form to hold on my own, and with that desire, I find the answer.

It's sleeping, a man with his chest slowly moving up and down, down and up. The eyes flutter back and forth beneath their closed lids. He's dreaming, unaware of his surroundings. I move in closer, resting upon his closed mouth, letting the breeze from his lungs play over me. He's the key to all my problems, I can feel it. This man is God, a potential creator to weave me into something that can be seen. I look at his hands and know they play a major role somehow in all this. I'm so close to creation, I can see it now, me basking in my newfound glory, it's just the need that will get me there. I have to need something so badly that it makes it happen.

I float up and move over to his ear. I can see it's in need of a Q-tip but that doesn't matter. If only he'll listen to me, pick me out of the thousands of thoughts that must be flowing through his head.

I whisper: Write me.

The next breath he takes is deeper than all the ones before it. His eyes move faster and faster behind the lids.

I say it louder: Write Me!

His whole body stirs, almost throwing me off. He shifts to his side, his eyes squinting up, but he continues to sleep.

I finally scream: WRITE ME!

And suddenly the eyes pop open. They're glassy and unseeing, but he's awake in a way. His breathing slows down and I stare into his face, but he can't see me. Yet. He sits up, I hear his tendons creaking as they stretch. I move up with him, whispering in his ear all the while. There's secrets I need to tell him, or else he won't make me right. So many screw-ups this guy has had in the past. I can see them, he wrote one story about a spider that crawled into a mom's brain and took over her body. How lame! But he can get the job done, I know he can, he just needs my help.

He's moving away from the bed, good boy. It's the computer he's after, screw the longhand, he wants to type. He sits in front of it, pulling the chair under him. The blank screen beckons us, a void of white just waiting to be filled. I move down to his arms and guide them, transferring his hands to the keyboard. The anticipation is killing me.

Slowly, he begins to type: "Yes you, Editor. For now we can forget about the thousands of potential readers that may or may not cast their eyes upon me..."

The rest is history.

# Summer Job

jason polICASTRO

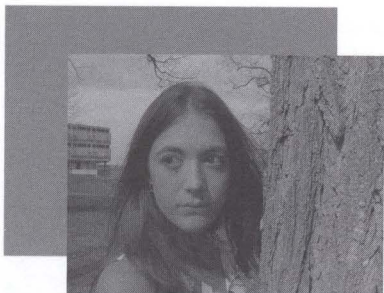
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Metallic vibrato of factory din like the pulse of an insane robot  
Thunderous roll of machinery in the cadence of profit.

Pale fluorescence barely illuminates the sight of a soul buckling under the weight  
of callous progress  
Hollow consolation of company picnics traded for blood, time with children, and  
pride.

Shuffling, heads lowered,  
Resigned to an endless sentence punishing circumstance, not worth.

Smoke break furloughs suspend the present tedium  
Offer a glimpse of what these souls looked like  
before they went yellow around the edges.



# Sestina

drea verone

---

Sun light across the side of our house  
warms my body, as I look through each window  
and remember a time from pictures—  
photographs—black-and-white—  
that speak more than figures or glances  
drawn back to beginnings.

To visualize the beauty of our beginnings—  
conversations and music in an old house—  
momentary sincere glances.

And beyond our candle-lit window  
snowfall—quiet and white—  
as if what appeared in pictures

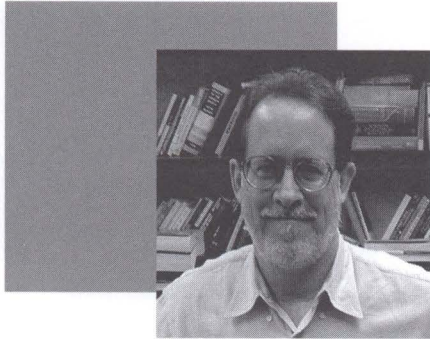
pre-existed us—fragments of pictures...  
But who will take us back to beginnings  
when you and I gazed at the black and white  
portraits of those who sat with us in this house.  
They come to mind now—images caught at a window  
that were understood in glances

we exchanged as children, glances  
that return us to a picture  
carved from light beyond our window.  
One goes toward each framed beginning  
renewed in the view that comes from the house  
and lingers there—blinds locked in white.

No one can return to beginnings—white  
paper can't reverse the direction of a glance—  
caught inside the rooms of a house  
where once two were brought together. Each picture  
tells of the erasure of beginnings—  
as you and I were held by the image at a window

and saw light reverse its direction—as if the window  
could again contain soft Queen Ann's Lace, white  
blossoms along the side of a fence, biannual beginnings  
signaling the speechlessness of a glance  
recalled in the private language of pictures  
stored away—years hidden inside our house.

We are left with images of glances  
exchanged in each aging picture.  
For us, there is only this one—unforgotten—home.



# Interview with Dev Hathaway

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Jaelyn Cole: What writers have the greatest influence on your writing?

Dev Hathaway: Some of the obvious writers are Cartwin and Andre Debuses. I think sort-of the standard people, when I first started writing there wasn't a certain writer I had in mind. I used to read stories by Pete Kayler, who's no longer alive. I think that sort-of gave me narrative lust, you know, to tell stories. Like most people, I've read a lot and I still read a lot of books. You keep finding more and more about how you want to tell a story, and about style.

JC: I've noticed the collage-like short stories that have a sort of homage quality to them. For example, "Howard In The Roses" does. The unique structure makes me wonder, do you have a certain procedure you go through when you write a story.

DH: No, I don't. It's funny, I was just reading some of the early sketches of Chekov, he's sort of all over the place. Some of his things are truly ground-breaking in terms of style, some of them are sketchy. When I wrote those particular stories, and they're called the Howard stories, I was trying to defy the usual conventions of story-telling and make miniatures and make prose-poem stories. Part of my writing style has a penchant for getting into voices like that, very interspaced and sort of language intensive pieces. It's hard to curb that on occasions, because I've gone too far down that road, but it's something I really like to do. There's not exactly a program going here, but I get on a roll on a particular kind of story and get racy with it, see what I can do with style.



JC: As well in those stories, the plots, they jump from one character to another, are intertwined which creates this musical effect. I was wondering if jazz musicians have an influence here.

DH: Jazz musicians aren't, but I really like the idea of jazzing around. Some of the authors I read early on like Clark Vamillion and Robert Cooper, even now I'm reading Rick Moody's *Demonology* and Moody came out at Brown University, and studied with Cooper when he was there. He does lots of language things with his stories. I wrote poems before I started writing stories, so I always had a sense of rhythm and musicality. When I did this book of nonfiction pieces, I thought of music and rhythm, and there are pieces of music that I could scan, not conventionally, but that have rhythms that just repeat and repeat, and I often tried to bring alliteration in there, just in enough that it wouldn't become saturated or obvious, but would just be part of the music of the pieces. It's something I do, but it's something I'm trying to squelch now that I'm writing a longer piece. It's just too much to try to sustain that. It's great for these little pieces. It's too much to keep up, and I think it would trope them to death over hundreds of pages. I like that musicality thing, sometimes I go for it sometimes I try to shut it down.

JC: I was wondering about the Howard series, is Howard symbolic of anything?

DH: No, it's just like any character name, it's just sort of a pedestrian name, a nonentity sort of person. I actually wrote the longer story, "The Life Of Howard" first. The idea came from a newspaper story, and its quoted at the beginning of the story, that whole line and its ludicrous situation gave me the seed for that story. After that I wrote some of the shorter pieces, and took this everyman character Howard and gave him some ordered stages in his life. I haven't done anymore, what you see in the book is all of the Howard pieces I've done. In that "Life Of Howard" story, he can almost be anyone that the narrator imagines him to be; two different Howards, the heart recipient is also Howard and there's supposed to be this tug-of-war between which one the reader identifies with. Howard envisions himself in these different personalities, like the school board guy or the business person. It's just these multiple personalities, now he's the kid on the football team, this just goes on and takes all these different possible Howards and repeats them and advances them. So he's sort of an all purpose character.

JC: I was wondering if any of your fiction reflected your life as a young man.

DH: No, I try to stay away from that. The nonfiction is as close as I've come to autobiography. I pick somebody who's different than I am. There's a story in there called "Silver Queen" and it's told from the point of view of an 18 year old, female basketball star, first person. In fact, when I submitted that story, the magazine when they accepted it sent the acceptance and the magazine it was printed in back, and in the contributors notes, it had my name in and it said she, referring to me. They just assumed that my non-gender specific name, that I was a woman, and I took that as a wonderful complement that I had gotten into a different kind of identity. So, I generally don't have autobiographical stories.

JC: There are quite a few intriguing ideas in *Skylarking on Honeysuckle Road*, specifically that you track the coming of spring and use a hurricane chart. Could you explain how you track spring, and what exactly is the hurricane chart?

DH: Well, the hurricane chart is a map of latitudes and longitudes and has the Caribbean as well as the eastern half of the United States. I put a little magnet on it and there used to be these radio stations before the weather channel that broadcast on a special band with the latest coordinates for hurricanes. The piece in there about tracking spring is really a bunch of made up stuff. It's meant to be that way, it's sort of mock-science, I figure out the coordinates, and I gauge the days, and the latitudes, and the daffodils are gonna be blooming in 48 hours. It's all over-the-top, pretend...it's supposed to sound okay, you know that's kind of neat, but ninety percent of it is hoey.

JC: What universities have you taught at, and how do you like teaching at Shippensburg University in comparison to those others?

DH: I've taught at all state schools, so they're fairly similar. I've taught at University of Louisiana Monroe, and I've taught at the State University in Kansas, and I really have liked teaching at all the places. I think the nice thing about teaching at Ship is I've been there a long time now, ten years, so I feel like I've really gotten comfortable. I sort of know what I can do, and I've found my stride. I'm not sure I can differentiate, I think students at Shippensburg are better than the students at the other places I've been

at, partly because Shippensburg is partly about competition, and the English Department has attracted good students to the English major.

JC: How do you teach a class on creative writing?


DH: I like going with the idea that everybody's ideas are relevant and its like any other discipline, like playing the piano, there aren't any short-cuts or secrets, you have to practice and practice and practice. The end result may not be, you know if you're the piano player that you end up playing at Carnegie Hall, and that doesn't mean that somehow your life as a piano player has fallen short of what you've envisioned it. I think sometimes writers think that when they speak the language, it's like one more step to turning the language into art. I think that's a big misconception that I have to disabuse people of as gently and repeatedly as possible, and otherwise make them find their self-invention and make people have good manners. I think good manners are very important, and I don't mean this in a superficial way, I mean the art of being constructive and supportive, in really specific, substantial ways. Helping people around a workshop is a high art of social interaction and intellectual exchange. So, in my mind, those are big things in a creative writing classroom that have to do with how we write and understand literature and speak to others about the trials and tribulations of trying to make the writing interesting.

JC: In what publication were you first published?

DH: School magazines when I was in college. I think my first published poem was published in a west-coast magazine called *Poetry Now*. It was great for all of the people they brought it. I feel that my real work started when I published fiction and my first story, which was "The Life Of Howard" story, was published in Missouri.

JC: I know that you edited a literary magazine for some time. Could you tell me about that?

DH: The magazine was called *Black Warrior Review*. It's a national literary magazine out of the University of Alabama. It was great, it was one of the reasons that I hoped that I could work for that magazine. It was a cool experience. I got to publish a short story by the writer Andre Debuses. I sneaked away from *Vanity Fair* Tina Brown, a later *New Yorker* editor and editor of

 *Vanity Fair*. I got to meet DeBuses and many other writers over my time there. The fun of design, layout, everything about a magazine, you know all the great stuff you are doing with the *Reflector*.

JC: What are you working on now?

DH: I'm working on a novel now. It's a kind of *On The Road* thing with two guys, one sort of the main character, he's a bit of a crazed person, and the narrator is the other guy, sort of a side-kick. He's dealing with the fact that the other guy has died in the course of their travels, and he's pissed that it falls to him to have to tell the story to finish the story, as it were, to what they were up to. He feels ambivalent, he feels cheated by how this guy's mad-cap adventure resulted in his friend's death, but he also misses him and wants to revere him and to make good on the things this person was trying to do. Those mixed feelings are kind of the thrust of the novel.

JC: Kind of sounds like what would be a close friend of Kerouac's reaction to

DH: That's not a bad way to look at it, but these guys are both fairly educated when they die. He dies and actually has all kinds of reading and wild dreams and makes all kinds of literary references. It gets pretty bizarre as things go on. It's gonna be a strange ride, but I'm excited about writing it. It's nice to get crazy about the writing in total. Finding a publisher, all these kind of things. This other part of me has been subdued for so long.

JC: What is the role of contemporary American fiction in our culture today?

DH: I think the role of contemporary American fiction in our culture today is to keep pushing the boundaries, explore the psyche, get into new territory and new mindsets of dealing with material that maybe in the past has been handled traditionally when you look at people like George Saunders who wrote *Pastoralia*, that collection of stories and in a number of works, you see people jazzing around with fictional voices and breaking away from narrative ways. Not in the ways that Barthelme did in the 80s, in that particular throw it in the face of the conventions, but works that start to use humor and structure in ways that haven't been done before. I think contemporary fiction is starting to incorporate non-fictional matter and not make

a big to-do about mixing the genres. You get works that are half and half. Rick Moody's *Demonology* is another book by somebody who is doing stories in a non-narrative way...

JC: Didn't you just read *Demonology* recently?

DH: Yes, in fact I went to hear him read at Dickinson in December. He's out of the Brown school of writers, so he was influenced by Coover and people like that. He uses offbeat humor and weird refrain and very dry technical labors to render emotional situations, many which are based loosely on family autobiography.

JC: Where would you position your work, like experimental or post-modern?

DH: I'd say more experimental than post-modern. I do a lot of jazzing around with my pieces and try to use different styles in my voices. In my stories I like to mix a lot of things. I have a story called "The Compleat Angler"; it's about Isaac Walton. It uses quotes from *The Compleat Angler*, by Isaac Walton, but it also makes up quotes, from some research that I did about planting in these old Greek philosophers and people that had these heavy weight things to say about the noble art of fishing and mythology, sea creatures and stuff. I did a little anachronistic stuff and mixed in Shakespeare, who isn't a contemporary, but I have a Walton and Shakespeare going brim fishing in the Thames together and they catch this Leviathon fish. That's right next to a story about a west coast middle age Republican tax assessor. I really try to mix around a lot of stuff. In the novel I'm working on now, *The Life and Times of Gaylan Bender*, the main character who's died, and his sidekick is telling the story, he has a whole notebook full of things he's written. They're strange philosophical pieces, and there's one called the Fountain of Cats, and I have these little pieces of his notebook. This provides reference to Kierkegaard and people like that that come into the novel. So I like to make a nice stew, not bothering what sort of ingredients or voices or structures might hold me back.



# What Passed Before

jason macey

---

Disturbing colours, maroon rolling along a sweeping tide of fresh blood and forlorn in the dark eyes of a coiled snake tense muscles and bundled nerves.

A delight to the senses breathing opium disturbing blue, too much blue, fever of a dance floor with underage intents, girls, and consequences, sweeping fatigue with a broom over the cracks lost into oblivion below.

Puerto Vallarta. Shit. I remember a girl that I met there that had the name whose English equivalent is Jasmine. Sweet yellow-green, sweet dreams, long ago in a rush of movement and living.

I half loved her when the light and music made the sweat and spilled Corona dance on her skin.

We sat on balconies smoking and drinking and watching kids play soccer and speculated that they were so good because they were so poor, and what else do you have to do, but play the game?

I smoked my pipe and died and lived and breathed deep...

# Nemesis

ryan kulp

---

In flesh I have begun  
But in steel did I rise  
And trapped in cold steel  
I found the crux of my demise

Born aloft was I  
By the bitters Aethers wings  
And laid before me I have seen  
The whole of my  
committed sins

Now I kneel and pray  
To the Suicide King  
I am become the  
Lord of the End of Everything

And bade by his will  
I have traversed the Spheres  
I have gazed upon Shadows  
I have fed upon tears

I am become his will  
I am become his thing  
A broke and vengeful minion  
Of the Suicide King



# I Smell Of Onions

erin delbaggio

---

I smell of onions. Onions and bread. Years of working behind the shield of a part time job at a local pizza joint has embedded me with a smell of hoagies and a loathing for anything deep fried with a side of marinara. Though the occupation has stripped my desires bare of most appetizers turned meals orderable at a collegiate 3 AM snack shacks, and has created for me a pheromone not relative to sex, but rather hunger; this shield not even worthy of mentioning on any resumes has unraveled lesions even more important than the one liners on any "Everything I ever needed to know I learned from..." you-fill-in-the-blank posters that hang on Freshman dorm room walls.

## **Lesson #1: Momma Knows Best, Just Ask Her**

Being a newly pubescent junior high student with a desire for independence can land you in one of two situations: 1) You begin to search for your "true self" amongst others who can't seem to find their own true selves and end up becoming someone else's true self behind the bars of a juvenile detention center, thus ruining any chance of a successful and productive life. 2) You work. At least that's what my mother believed. She believed that most adolescents were trash, and would then question my desire for "playing in the dumpster". However, she believed that working was not only financially fulfilling, but safe; a mother's dream. Then there was the pizza shop: A painless Huffy ride from my parent's house, free meals, a sense of responsibility, a few dollars to fill my nylon, Velcro Nike wallet and a place my parents frequented a little too often to not deserve a favor, my job being this favor. "Eh, da 'lil wun wanna werk eh? Ya, I fine 'er sumfin to do, eh? No worries, capish?"



## **Lesson #2: “lil wuns” have “pritty hans”...**

The “sumfin” he had for me to do was my first modeling job, an Aztec tiled counter becoming my runway. As a long haired, fifteen year old blatantly Italian girl adorned in “my first make-up set” I welcomed customers with my impeccable English amongst a sea of Italian accents thicker than our locally famous pizza sauce.

For the first two years of employment I was forbidden to touch the oven, (to my boss, a 650 degree phallic symbol) because of the eminent demise that would result. Whenever I thought the coast was clear my boss would swoop in and save me from my own destruction. “Eh!? Erie, Erie! Whattayathink yer doin’ eh? Ya wanna bern dem pritty ‘lil hans o’ yers eh? Fuhgetaboutit, aight? I get it, I get it.” With a sarcastic sigh of relief I would let my boss, an impeccable father resembling a 5’8” Italian sausage come to my rescue from the big bad phallic symbol that lived for the satisfaction of burning the hands of unsuspecting “lil wuns”. Two years later my “pritty hans” had outgrown my “lil wun” status, and my long hair, along with “my first make-up set” disappeared revealing a seventeen year old tom-boy that dropped the last consonant of every word and dabbled in both Italian and Spanish to accommodate my coworkers and impress the locals who considered “Pennsylvania Dutch” to be the only second language they needed.

I became the most powerful girl in Small Town, Pennsylvania. I remained a customer’s time clock, quality control, seater and translator between them and their chef all while pulling a perfectly symmetrical slice of pepperoni pizza out of a 650 degree phallic symbol bare handed. I would translate a conversation, removing much of the truth and with an addition of whatever mood I was in; usually something political to replace the preconceived notion of dirty immigrant with something beautiful and worldly. My immigrants became little characters, and as an aspiring writer I lived for little characters. Customers became my interactive audience and viewed me as intelligent and mature; little did they know I was just working my material out on them, capish?

## **Lesson #3: You Love Where You’re Not**

My friends all worked as well. Some chose local restaurants like me, washing dishes or cleaning up after businessmen on their lunch breaks who

would leave them a two dollar tip and a look down when they passed by, and some, who were fortunate enough to have parents with their own businesses worked for the improvement of not only themselves, but their families as well; which I guess wasn't too far from what I was doing. However I worked for a pizza shop. *The pizza shop. My pizza shop.* It became a refuge from my home, which was fine in itself, but at seventeen, wherever you existed was where you didn't want to be. I loved my job, when I wasn't there, and I missed home when I was anywhere else. I once had a customer who resembled an over dressed Ken doll, who apparently went to the same plastic hair dresser, comment to his companion about how quaint it was to visit a small town pizza joint and take in the "rural-ness". There it was, staring me down, a made up word spilling out of the mouth of corporate's poster child. Not only that, but his intention was to stage a silent coup against *my* shop. He ordered a veal parm with spaghetti, no garlic bread; saying that "garlic breath was no way to meet a client" followed by a chick behind his teeth and a hand motion of a gun to accompany. I have never put so much garlic salt on a piece of veal in all my life, he never came back; must have been the rurality.

#### **Lesson #4: If Old McDonald Doesn't Exist In Your Name, You're Not A True Italian**

It was obnoxiously obvious how Italian my employers were. Their accents, that only got thicker when customers were present, and physiques comparative to two of the most lovable video game brothers to ever scale a plumber's pipe made up the "e-i, e-i, o complex" meaning that if your last name didn't end with a vowel, you were obviously not Italian enough for their liking. Mine ends in two, making me twice the Italian I needed to be, and totally obnoxious during role call in Elementary school. Not only does it end with two vowels, but I was blessed with a double consonant that when spoken by a true European blends into a beautiful lyrical whisper, yet when stumbled over by the overzealous American sounds like a speed bump that scrapes the underside of your car until you finally get over it. I was damned however, with an Irish first name, Erin, which my mother only settled for once her first choice was rejected. Erin, though a beautiful Irish name, is damn near impossible to say correctly with an Italian accent and thus left me affectionately called "Mary". Erin also left me hating Saint Patrick's Day when banners would be hung adorned with


“Erin Go Braugh” which left me not so affectionately called “Erin No Bra”. I would have much rather preferred Mary.

### **Lesson #5: Patience Is A Virtue, But Only To The Amish**

There is a small monster that lives inside every one of us once we become hungry. Doctors would say that the “grumbling” in our stomach when we desire food is due to the body sending a signal to the mind that nutrients are needed; I say it’s the monster trying to get out. The monster is always present, however when it feels threatened by a delay of nutrients to its host, its ugly face appears. I have met some of these monsters, including my own, understand their frustration, am sympathetic to their needs, and would want nothing more than to reach across the counter and rip their ugly little heads off...but I don’t. Most monsters crave the only thing on the menu that either A) takes a small army of gourmet chefs to prepare, or B) is out of stock. However, what must be remembered is that once the monster inside us all is fed, we return to the completely competent individual that we were always meant to be, even if apologies are forgotten.

I had a customer who would bring his wife in every Sunday evening after church. They were in their late 60s, enjoyed the time out, appreciated this constant reminder of the weeks that passed, and more than anything loved each and every employee that prepared their food. Over the years they saw the constantly changing shop, menu, and employees, yet always referred to me as the “little one”, regardless of my seniority in the shop. There was never a red carpet laid out for them, and once in a while I would forget an appetizer or two, but every time I saw their 1986 Cadillac roll around the block, the husband hanging onto the steering wheel with both hands scouting out parking spaces, the wife pointing to either side of the street to better act as his navigator I smiled. The winter of 98 gave Small Town, Pennsylvania its largest snow storm ever, amidst a sea of discussions concerning global warming; it also gave the wife a stroke. I knew something was wrong when on Wednesday night the husband made an appearance. He proclaimed while dumping out a few crumbled dollars and a handful of change: “She’s in the hospital. I can’t be there anymore. They won’t let me. They say visiting hours are over. I don’t know how to cook. This is what I have.” He stood there, counting out small piles of dimes and quarters, all equaling a dollar.

I had no words.



There he stood, this rock. I looked up from the small piles he was still constructing, told him I knew exactly what he needed, winked and quickly walked back to the freezer, locking myself inside.

I broke down.

I couldn't help it. I wanted to reach across the counter and hug him, touch his hand, tell him I cared, that I understood, that she would be ok; but I never was a good liar. So instead I cooked. I put so much heart into that meal that I think I lost part of myself in the process. As he was leaving he told me not to worry, and that he would see me on Sunday; he never came. I stood there at the counter, waiting. No Cadillac, no strangled steering wheel, no navigation.

Two weeks later they reappeared on a random Thursday night. He walked her in, gently holding her left arm as she hid her face behind a hat. I tried not to look as they came to the counter, but sometimes even something as horrific as a train wreck has to be viewed. Writing their order down, I tried to hide my excitement, my concern, my attachment, my pride and my tears. A beautiful woman had been torn apart by a glitch in her brain, and knowing that she may not be able to speak, I asked no questions. Keeping my head lowered I totaled their dinner, not wanting to make eye contact. I held my hand out and waited for the exact change to be dropped but instead I got silence.

Looking up I saw patience.

A woman who had raised five sons, waited on her husband's return during World War II, worked at the paper mill to keep herself busy and remained a constant among church benefits stood in front of me trying to count out sixteen cents in change. I wanted again to reach across the counter, take her hand, make the big bad stroke go away and return her back to the normal, brilliant, kind woman I had taken for granted for four years; but I was never a good pretender. Behind her stood three angry monsters awaiting their meals; I couldn't have cared less.

## **Lesson #6: You Don't Have To Be Called Simba To Understand The Circle Of Life**

Once I graduated from Small Town, Pennsylvania High School I went on to attend Smaller Town, Pennsylvania University. My mom again told me that I had two options: A) I succeeded at being a scholar, graduating with a degree I could use to begin my career in the

“real world” resulting in a summer home at Rehoboth Beach where she would frequent often, or B) I worked. I chose to do both. After dragging myself through an array of part-time jobs, on campus positions, and even dabbling at owning my own business, I ran as quick as my stout Italian legs would carry me to the best pizza shop out of town and begged for a position; I’ve been there ever since. My days entail lengthy lectures on the importance of reading “between lines”, my nights are consumed with bobbing my head to the sound of my car’s after market stereo while satiating the entire town’s monsters as a delivery girl. I suppose not much changes. Instead of discovering life behind the shield of an Aztec tiled counter, I now get two-minute increments of a customer’s life, on my terms. I’ll now slam my car door shut, trot up a darkened driveway barely lit by the florescent glow of a porch light, step carelessly through an ill-placed herb garden, and skip up the three concrete stairs of the patio and place myself in front of a door I’ve visited twice a week for the last six months. Readjusting my packages, I’ll ring an iridescent doorbell and listen with envy as a few notes of Beethoven echo through the marble-floored mud room of the interior. A man in his early forties will shuffle towards the smoked glass door carrying a checkbook and a pen, gracious to see me, yet hesitant to open the door to a complete stranger. He’ll size me up like a suspicious customer on a used car lot. Glancing at my packages, my clothes, and then my face, he’ll smile with relief as he realizes I’m nothing more than a pizza delivery girl awaiting payment and possible gratuity for my troubles. He’ll be drunk again, the third time this month and his wife’s car will have been replaced by another vehicle slightly hidden from the road. Not surprisingly, his wife will be parked 2 miles across town at another customer’s house. That customer will get a hoagie with no onions and she’ll get her favorite, spaghetti and meatballs, pretty honest meal for someone wrecking a home. They teach me about their lives, their histories, their hardships, their kids, their patience, their trust and their infidelities all for a few dollars and a small form of gratuity. Most people think I only know what they like on their pizzas, quite the contrary I know what they like in their lives, and most of the time it’s more than pepperoni and extra cheese, even if their monster would disagree.



# In Unison

jason polICASTRO

---

I see through counterfeit smiles and contagious apathy  
that greet me like a dealer coaxing a junkie into  
one  
more  
fix.

This is the essence of my domain  
and it contains  
a belligerent army of bastards, beggars, and thieves

Sunsets echoed in cold faces  
that have forgotten they were born there  
where sun runs down sky  
and writes stories in their footprints

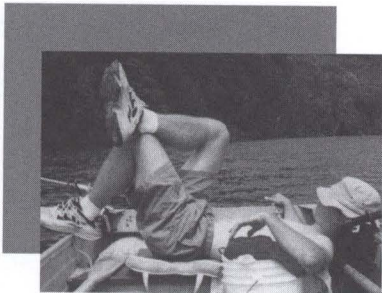
Forgotten that every one starts the same  
authored by time's framing  
spun from the same root.

here it seems that indifference is home,  
its name scrawled on the walls,  
on the front page,  
they say no man is an island,

but I often feel alone.

Pupil your sight.  
Feather your wings.

I'm tired of trying to understand  
Why no one dresses the wounds of stubborn ignorance,  
Because they are bleeding us all dry.



# Of Self

jason macey

---

示  
明

The descending light  
sun, moon, and stars  
the full of knowledge  
wisdom descending

誠  
仁  
信

sincerity in directness  
focus of eagle, of hawk  
fullness in manhood  
in fidelity to the vow

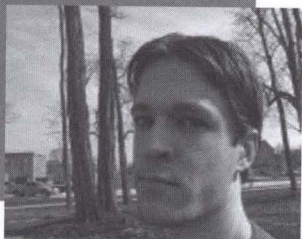


徳  
得

will directed of its own  
by captive heart  
to prosper turn  
sun motion of enrichment

agitated movement  
legs reaching forward  
final succession  
found truth in the self.

心  
徳



# The Pulpit Watchers

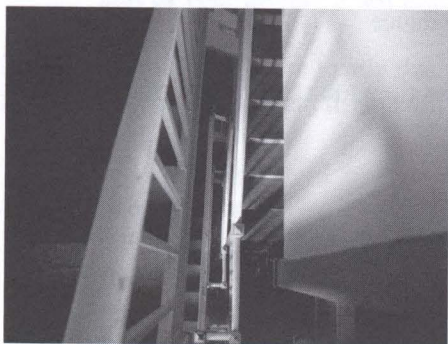
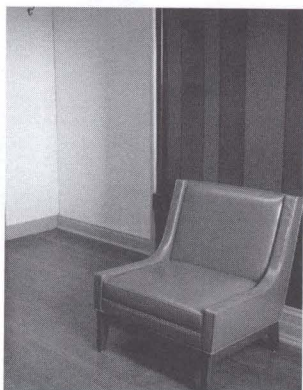
jonathan lister

---

tiny cries over Highland rain  
soft as your mother's last request-  
Oh,  
The waterfalls are lovely this year!  
playing a pizzicato trickle off the  
End  
of your tongue.  
See my dear,  
the choices are laid bare for in silence would we still  
find voice.  
How would youth seem to us if we could plead  
With fate and lesser fortunes that death be unknown  
To skin that could never tighten.  
The pulpit watchers do prey, perched as dreaming vultures  
much like the fear young and old as the cloth sought a path  
to absolve those with not breath enough to hear.  
A dance faith to faith,  
sight to distant points of light...

Diminished afternoons our fathers bid their time upon  
A stone or two stringing the fragments down heather'd hills  
Where the wild nights of Dublin have led to retirement in  
Cork  
(Lemonade never tasted so sweet!)  
While gone,  
we would play at let the May pole sit as ash to think and  
dream  
of more appealing endeavors- this being incomplete as our  
remembrances  
settle to the ritual of the tide-like dance

Such appreciations we wept for as time took the river further  
down.  
Descending...  
Like fireflies upon the blades of dawn,  
A ghost of yearlings walking against the burning candle of  
our lives,  
    ...Travelling  
Only my tattered soles and worn walking stick to face the  
weather.  
Tiny cries over Highland rain,  
A stone to touch the decadent glances,  
See my dear,  
the choices are laid bare.



Come visit our new home in Horton Hall:

*Reflector* Office  
301 Horton Hall

(photographs courtesy of Bryna Connelly)

Insuperable logic of the cast-off. I could not have  
written you otherwise. Nor viewed the momentum with  
which we would meet again and again in this book. A  
perpetual re-search that is folded by an inquiry. An  
injury offering accord. Sea-salt on the tongue.  
Betokenings of primary care. "That we are only  
as we find out we are"

~Andrew Mossin

## Compact Disc (if included)

John Taggart

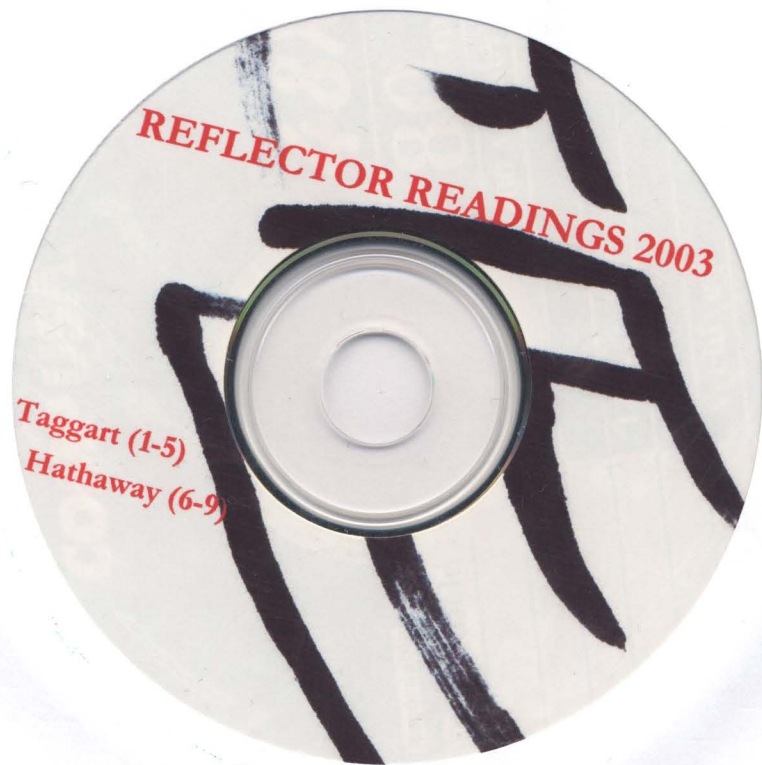
recorded 2/13/03 in Shippensburg, PA

1. intro
2. pastoral #1, #3, #4
3. pastoral #5, #6, #7, #8
4. pastoral #9, #10, #12
5. set: pastorals #13-15

Dev Hathaway

recorded 2/20/03 in Shippensburg, PA

6. fiction intro
7. silver queen from *the widow's boy*
8. nonfiction intro
9. *skylarking on honeysuckle road*



**REFLECTOR READINGS 2003**

**Taggart (1-5)**

**Hathaway (6-9)**

