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Landing Points

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The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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LANDING POINTS

by

MATT BOYLE

A master's capstone project submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the capstone requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Landing Points

by

Matt Boyle

Advisor: Jason Tougaw

[LANDING POINTS concerns the creative conscience of a middle-aged notary supplies salesman. He looks in on himself through the layered experiences offered by his position in time and space. Set roughly in the future on the South Shore of Long Island, beaches as well as more central locations, Queens, and Berlin, his odyssey takes the reader through a series of memories endlessly infused with desire to establish limits on the writing of the self.]

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2016, origins

While attending a community-theatre performance of *Waiting for Godot*, my mother commented how the two characters sounded like her Uncle. She maintained a paternal affection towards him and had been left in charge of overseeing the mechanics of his burial and estate. After the performance, my mother continued on with her incredulous conclusion. *They sounded just like him.* You could say my writing of the **Landing Points** text began somewhere here. I felt his death inside myself and a mourning of myself in the aspect of others. The emotional core of **Landing Points** rotates from such an understanding: representation of a self lies in identification of others¹. The style you find in completion results from navigating the ethics surrounding this type of self; performative, consumption-oriented, agglutinating around peculiar bodies and situations. The mechanics of memory allow for the possibility of narrative voice to emerge throughout various drafts. What would become **Landing Points** began in Fall 2016 under the rubric of writing the lives of others. I was enamored with my Great Uncle; he had exhibited streams of what I believe could be considered Alzheimer's. There was some form of clinical diagnosis. His propensity towards middle-class solitude and an elongated, impersonal manner of speech made diagnosis difficult, or at least my family's collective desire to have a diagnosis at all hard. Reading **Landing Points**, you will notice an interest in the narrator of doubling himself with Uncle Christopher. There had been some similarity to our respective roles. His manner of speech had always been hard to track, encased in semantic peculiarities, a grammar of surprise, tonal inflections that seemed to descend from somewhere else. You could believe it was Ireland. He made no judgement. A first-generation American, he must have had something of this country we used to define ourselves, eliminating even a portion of German ancestry from our father's side during casual discussion so

¹ I use "other" in sense of the psychiatrist Jean Laplanche, for whom it is always an act of physical embodiment, contra Lacan's more disembodied approach to the idea. (1994)

infatuated we were with monogamous belonging to Ireland. His innately obscure lifestyle and manner of speech made growing memory loss difficult to identify. I return to my mother. An educated woman of middle-class extraction, she generally lambasts art or literature beyond realistic bounds. Nevertheless, Beckett's play seemed to offer her catharsis at a level of representation other modes were perhaps stylistically inadequate to do. *The sound of a human voice*.

2017, 2018, development, completion

Genette denies the mimetic function of all narration. The evolution of **Landing Points** would find greatest hindrance in its development of narrative voice. Genette defines voice as degrees of presence or non-presence of the narrator inside the narration. A narrative implies narration. His structuralist analysis is to localize the narrator in relation to what is being told. "By using narrative voice as a concept through which all the other categories are articulated, Genette engages the context of production as a fundamental element. (Guillemette & Lévesque)" Presence or non-presence would shift in my opening pieces². Earlier, I described an ethics surrounding a self based on consumption of others as stylistic imperative to my work. The consumptive impulse to perform various subjectivities I came into contact with in the course of self-formation delineates ethical boundaries. Where do I stop? Who can I choose? Assumption of minds and bodies outside the circumstance of a proscribed radius paints a nefarious picture. Not all people desire representation. An intransitive relation, safe in death and decay. For both the observed and observer. I strained for something generative. My original context had been towards Bildungsroman. Along with the morality it supposes. And also an objective seal of quality I heard in the voices and vocabularies of Marxist critics, as well as disciplines like anthropology, sociology, and analytic philosophy³.

² Graham Priest has described post-structuralism as adumbrating signs of authorial presence. (1994).

³ I would highlight Loic Wacquant and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *carnal sociology* and *habitus* as having most effect on my writing; for both limiting and defining its reach.

Concretizing things outside academia too. But my writing had emerged in a highly individual consolatory function. And not at all times did I imagine sharing it beyond whatever audience I imagined during the moment of its production. The direction of this writing can be spoken of only with recourse to theological figurements of death and nothingness. Indeed, my conscious writing of a narrator into the text, wherein the voice has become autodiegetic (to again borrow Genette's terminology), emerged only after discarding these previous attempts. Under the realization I was writing myself and not my Uncle, I was released from the ethical boundary which presupposes and inhibits a scribe's writing. Not the everyday morals writing a self or other inevitably cuts, but the act of inscription itself. I was free to dirty the white page up with little black marks. That is to say, I moved from writing non-fiction to fiction. A sort of litany of the self ensues. This required entrance within the hypostatic gates of Literature.

My project then became to either fully realize or insert myself into past work through applying the sticky glue of narrative voice. This constituted much of the revisional work I did with Prof. Tougaw. He pushed from the outset for an embodied narrator. A ripe consciousness for which the memorializing, lamenting language I found both beautiful and descriptive could materialize inside the narration itself. The critic Jonathan Gibbs describes this as "the central gambit" of autofiction. Prof. Tougaw impelled me to consider what I was doing under this generic distinction. I find it a fair assessment. I include a preceding Gibbs quote in full:

What I love about autofiction is that prioritises consciousness (aka subjectivity) as a strong filter through which to view the world, but what I love about the old-fashioned novel is that it does the opposite. And I suppose this is simply what has made the novel such a dominant cultural form for so long: that it has been able to encompass the objective and subjective, the world-as-realistically-presented and the world-seen-through-consciousness. I suppose James Wood would say that at its height – Flaubert's *style indirect libre* – it does both at

once. And I suppose autofiction is simply produced by people who have had enough of that rather refined literary style, and want to push the novel towards the speculative, the philosophic, the contingent: the novel as scattered notes, Wittgenstein with characters.

(2018)

I am one of those people. But my argument is that the production does not need to be so anachronistically disembodied and in fact has defined literary antecedents. My narrator could be considered a form of *Bartleby*. Melville's ghost terrorizing the incessant swells of commerce in odd melody. I turn to a well-known lineage:

As a scrivener, *Bartleby* belongs to a literary constellation. Its polar star is Akaky Akakievich ("for him, the whole world was in some sense contained in his copies...he had his favorite letters, and when he got to them he truly lost his wits"); its center is formed by the twin stars, Bouvard and Pecuchet ("the good idea that both secretly nourished -- copying"); and its other extremity is lit by the white lights of Simon Tanner ("I am a scribe" is the only identity he claims for himself) and Prince Myshkin, who can effortlessly reproduce any handwriting. A little further on lies the asteroid belt of Kafka's courtroom clerks. But *Bartleby* also belongs to a philosophical constellation, and it may be that it alone contains the figure merely traced by the literary constellation to which *Bartleby* belongs."

(Agamben, 1999, p. 243)

I too am interested in the origins of this figure. Some personal context may be necessary. I did not read "*Bartleby, the Scrivener*" (Melville, 2015). I listened to it on the way to work. I work a job bearing distinct relationship to the narrator of **Landing Points**. I listened to "*Bartleby, the Scrivener*" in installments during the forty-minute-to-an-hour commute between where I live in Queens and where I work in Long Island and then continued to write pieces of text in the interstices of days at work until October 2018. I became interested in suffusing the whole of a

Bartlebyian consciousness across a work of literary fiction. From here the majority of my production occurred during specific allotments of time off spent inside the apartment I am renting with my partner, and other sites such as public and private libraries, international conglomerate coffee-houses, and a certain artisanal spot on Northern Blvd. I am a third-generation Irish-American in New York built under a scaffolding of doubling. I retain certain features of past dispositions, while eliminating others. The disjunction of the commute is not lost on me (or anyone else who lives and works in the area). That Agamben chooses Bartleby as exemplar for delving into the historical-theological-philosophical foundations underlying his figurement should also not be lost.

An American, a New Yorker, the simultaneous hovering and evisceration of History is essential for iterations of the self contained in these regions. Practically, on the level of text, I make this distinction through my narrator's vocation (maybe subtle, but worth the power of differentiation it extends between himself and prior Bartlebys): He markets notary seals. He does not make them. He is not a notary. He does not use them. He sells them.

The peculiar American import of the Bartleby figure Agamben describes my narrative pull. As an institutional role, the notary is ancient. They appear mostly to place a seal on wills, real estate transactions, or in some states, marriage. While their phantomly bureaucratic bodies seem somewhat safe, the notary's seal, a word used to describe both the image of the seal itself and the object used to produce the image, dies. Legislation has been passed or is under process to be in most states requiring a stamp or equivalent digital file of the notary's seal to be placed on notarized documents. The rationale being *its reproducible*.

So the idea of a seal remains, but no longer as the raised, individually sensual image of the past. It must become reproducible. Nevertheless, the idea attests to the elements of a document's encryption inside an official, state apparatus. But one needs no accreditation to sell seals. I admit

the comedy and digress.

Landing Points could be considered an extended effort in tracking how I sound like someone else. If it is an autofiction, and I would argue otherwise or for an extended definition than what Gibbs gave, it is an autofiction aware of its propensity to envelop the consciousness of others and reproduce it in forms amenable for further consumption. A brutal economy. I found stylistic expression of the content I wanted to say and see happen through a narrative voice. The novelist John Holten, a seminal thinker and writer for me, as well as the real life V. in my text, has described style as resulting from a general confrontation between the conceptual and the real (2016). Representation is always be privy to style. We are copiers, artificers, and not the implement itself. Agamben aligns Bartleby with the philosophers for his consistent demand on contingency, a permanent point from which both nothing and everything can happen. The Bartleby figure is like God in this way. I had become fascinated with a debate concerning the location of Jesus in the Bread and Wine. I researched it during 2017. Seminal Protestant Reformers reasoned elaborate theorems. Examples were garnered from Biblical exegesis. Different interpretations were reached by the various ideologues, but all agreed in refuting the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, wherein a priest conforms the Body and Blood of Christ into the Bread and Wine. Eucharistic consumption initiates a debate concerning Christ's contingency; the figure for whom all Christians is the highest experience of the material world. I bring the Marburg Colloquy (the debate I am referring to occurring on October 3, 1529) for its potential impact on the narrator of **Landing Points**. It has been part of my project to investigate the long tide of historical growth embodied in peculiar subjects. I am not too far removed from my own Catholic origins to be excepted. But I have been placed through the rudder of an American work week. Indeed, it is an inquisition of mine whether or not, on a personal level, every Catholic must run a type of Protestant program in order to que advancement in America. And whether the teleology of a better religion could be true.

Theologically, such a program is built in the shade of the debate around the location of Christ: He is everywhere; and to contain Him inside a specific location such as the Eucharist is to commit blasphemy against the magnitude of God.

The social impact of this formula I let play out in **Landing Points**, hovering quite literally over the narrator's head. The terror of conversion besets him. American Christianity evolved its brand from the founding hills of the Zwinglian, Calvinist factions of Day 3 of the Marburg Colloquy. So while from *Bartleby* my narrator garners a philosophical type, the singular largest influence in configuring *a discrete consciousness through which he sees the world* derives from an early American theologian: Jonathan Edwards.

Through short paragraphs, sometimes moving longer over several pages, *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* offers metaphysical rumination announcing itself from his experience of matter. Gorgeous attention to minute physical detail results. Edwards evokes a scientific disposition. You look. Observe. Yet the consciousness of *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* must always direct towards *the exterior of an exterior*. Otherwise it may fall into the blasphemy of localizing Christ. God cannot be contained. His physical world is a relief, a contrast, a negative in order to bring true reality to the observer:

638. Vanishing of Shades. There is a harmony between the methods of God's providence in the natural and religious world, in this as well as many other things: that as when day succeeds the night, and the one comes on and the other gradually ceases, those lesser lights that serve to give light in the absence of the sun gradually vanish as the sun approaches. One star vanishes after another as daylight increases: the lesser stars first and the greater ones afterwards. The same star gradually vanishes till at length it wholly disappears and all these lesser lights are extinguished and the sun appears in his full glory above the horizon. So when the day of the gospel dawned, the ceremonies of the Old Testament and

ordinances of the law of Moses that were only appointed to give light in the absence of the sun of righteousness (or until Christ should appear), and shone only with a borrowed and reflected light (like the planets), were gradually abolished one after another, and the same ordinance gradually ceased, and those ordinances that were principal (one of which was the Jewish sabbath) continued longest. There were a multitude of those ceremonies, which was a sign of their imperfection, but they altogether did but imperfectly supply the place of the sun of righteousness. But when the sun of righteousness is come, there is no need of them. When the true sacrifice is come, there is no need of any of the legal sacrifices. When Christ is come and gives and introduces the gospel, that is the ministration of the Spirit, there is no more need of ceremonies in worship. But the time is now come that men must worship God in spirit and truth. So there is a multitude of stars that shine in the night, but they altogether do but very imperfectly supply the absence of the sun. But when the sun rises, they all vanish, and we find no want of them. (Edwards, p. 143)

This *seeing behind structures for significance* is also at the heart of the perceptive environment in **Landing Points**. My idea in bringing all this up is not to obscure but give foundational origin to my iteration of the Bartleby figure. He plays it out through devices used to contingently situate the reader, including sitting, walking, talking, driving, and eating. I prioritize both the social and individual aspect of eating. As a site of tension, it most accurately drew from my collision of personal knowledge of the Catholic Mass and historic understanding of its contextual relevance⁴.

Locating origins with the intention to proceed moves the text forward. The separation of form and content is an eternal litmus test between the narrator and myself. Body to body. Mind and body. Mind to mind. And I bring historical theology to problematize the seeming blankness

⁴ See (Uburoi, 2002) for a discussion of the Eucharistic debate on the foundations of European modernity.

towards the past Gibbs supposes autofiction immerses itself. Agamben locates such a discussion himself with the figure of Bartleby. And as I began writing with conviction those people around me I love or have relations, I often turned inward, frightened at what would occur through the sacrilege of such representation. Did I desire a concurrent death? My horror of representation bears something of the iconoclast; who sees blasphemy in attempts to contain the infinite and smashes them. The chance of this terror being invoked grows as language becomes more concrete. We can roundly say poetic. Seeing the words as images makes the threat of destruction intensely imminent. An inversion to poetry thus links to the communicative bridge of prose.

The smoky air surrounding all writing of a Christian self aims for personal affect in an embodied reader. A consistent anxiety is provoked in all forms of representation undirected towards this purpose. The narrator heeds Bartleby's call to do nothing and everything at once through the mechanics of memory; it is a flexible medium through which he can both confess the past and transform his future. The contingency of his experience of himself is related to the death of Uncle Christopher. That he should be awarded certain material advantages in the language of sacrifice.

There is Dante, who turns the "I" of the poet into a generic third person who only functions to describe love, and there is Heidegger who replaces the "I" with an empty being which is only its ways of Being. These experiments not only call into question the truth of their statements, they jeopardize the very mode of one's existence. They produce an "anthropological change" which is just as decisive as the appearance of the hand through the erect posture of the primate. (Agamben, p. 260)

In essence, my narrator simply wants, on a literal level, to be both where he is and where he is not. Memory thus becomes a moment for complete self-effacement; capturing the past for its confessional function, the regenerative potential it offers the self and others. I would add the

Augustinian “I” to Agamben’s typologies: flexible within the bounds of History, only moving from storage inside material objects. New York, American memory plays a specific function in the text, as it seems possible to reference itself only through past cultural-social identification and its future annihilation into the individual.

2019, forward

The inconsolable avoids two extremes: (1) the first could be qualified as one form of modern ethos, the demand to quickly “reinvest” the present, to be sated by it and to disavow loss; (2) the second could be qualified as counter-modern, melancholic deploring of what has been lost. The figure of the inconsolable, and in this it seems to offer a resource for thinking about a contemporary ethos, holds in view, and in disposition, the experience of loss, and yet works (or endeavors to persevere) in working to take hold of that loss and to give it form. This figure is not tragic, or comic, and certainly not ironic, although aware of elements of each. It is a figure seeking repair, whilst knowing that restoration of the prior state is impossible, and who is simultaneously recalcitrant towards demands to “get on” with adaptation. (Stavrianakis, 2016)

The writing of **Landing Points** began hoping for consolation through writing another. *The sound of a voice*. Realizing impossibility, my project morphed into a fiction centered on the self. I invite classification of **Landing Points** as autofiction, with reservation: it should invite nuanced understanding of the situations, people, and context from which selves spring. It should not be a red light beyond the present, even though its investment inside a peculiar consciousness may render it so. I consider the text I have created as existing on a deep plane of embodied, historical writing, wherein limits of ideological change and conflict face immersion into the ameliorating waves of everyday American commerce. I imagine **Landing Points** itself going further, as the narrator continues to realize perception of himself as a religious ascetic, entering the dunes of the island.

While I acknowledge a dystopian flair, it is my hope to move the writing towards a fuller realism requiring a separate consciousness. My current idea is for the entrance of female French sociologist who has been commissioned to study the inhabitants of this island, whose residents refuse to leave despite concise scientific models positing annihilation at a certain date by hurricane. She studies them in the wake of various bureaucratic wranglings.

I set a goal in the Capstone Prospectus submitted September 17th, 2018 to develop a “plausible readability” by late November. I believe I have achieved this now through careful revision. I am grateful for the respect Prof. Tougaw has shown in regard to my twin and often fraught desire to create this “plausible readability” while maintaining personal integrity. And while sensitively accepting classification as autoficton, I would also encourage understanding my project along the lines proposed by art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty for its outward-seeking repose:

Parafictioneers produce and manage plausibility. But plausibility (as opposed to accuracy) is not an attribute of a story or image, but of its encounter with viewers, whose various configurations of knowledge and “horizons of expectation” determine whether something is plausible to them. While something similar is true of any artwork—that its meaning is produced in the encounter with the spectator—a parafiction creates a specific multiplicity. (2009, p. 22-23)

She continues:

“It’s this, perhaps, that separates the implications of parafiction from stereotypically postmodern assertions of the inaccessibility and relativism of truth or the real. In experiencing most parafiction—where the fictional hangs on the factual—one is evaluating not only whether a proposition is fictional, but what parts of it are true. (p. 28)

I can attest to the power such fiction inclines. A novel by the aforementioned Holten, **The**

Readymades, which should be considered as a literary manifestation of the parafictional genre Lambert-Beatty has yet extended only to the plastic, visual, performing arts, launched my current project down a pure path of inspiration. Reading, writing, inside a conscious, active, literary tradition became palatable. I let Holten speak in an interview and describe some of his own proclivities:

I'm not sure how to feel about David Shields' book *Reality Hunger*, but what I do know is that he makes a good point : literary fiction, lyrical realism, a la James Wood just feels somehow out of touch with the time. Fiction is always, and must, represent something more than just a made up story: it is predicated on the world the reader brings to the work. If I create a neo-avant-garde art group, as I do in the words of *The Readymades*, then why shouldn't I also extend the fiction to its logical conclusion: concrete art? Fiction is everywhere, from four minute pop songs to films; I like the idea that my words can show the conversation they are having not just with the literary tradition they're coming from, but also the many other forms too: visual art, film, music and indeed, other less glamorous things, environmental science, history, engineering. Maybe my next book will be illustrated with the designs of oil rigs. Or the social history of the German train network...I'm just talking about realism here: *The Readymades* is a realist novel, realist fiction changes with the age, many novelists today fail to realise this and write books like Dickens or Balzac, or even worse, Evelyn Waugh. That's what Shields and company are saying, and I'd agree, the guys making Grand Theft Auto, today they're real fictional realists.

The final image of **Landing Points** emerges from the narrator discovering just near the place he has grown was a cable must have run transmitting data underneath our feet during seminal years of youth. The "Fibre-Optic Link Around The Globe" (FLAG-1).

The two-thirds of the Earth covered by water has traditionally only figured into security strategies as a conduit for commerce and military forces, or as a barrier to potential

invasion. This is beginning to change. No longer just a buffer or maritime highway, the seas have begun to represent a territory holding some of the world's most valuable natural and military resources. New technologies enable better tracking and exploitation of these resources in deeper waters. The resulting competition has led countries to pursue territorial claims, or create new territories, to gain control over neighboring seas. At least 95% of voice and Internet traffic travels through about 300 transoceanic fiber-optic cables along the seabed, including military transmissions and more than \$4 trillion per year in financial transactions, all of which could be vulnerable to disruption if nations do not take the right precautions... In addition to the cables themselves, their onshore cable landing stations (CLS)/cable termination station (CTS) are particularly vulnerable – and easier to find than a submerged cable. Sometimes consisting of a non-descript building on a beach or marshland; these locations are often the junction of several cables that are then connected with terrestrial phone and cellular networks. An accident or attack on one of them could have the same effect, in the short-term, of cutting multiple cables at once. Because they are easier to monitor, a break at the termination point could be diagnosed more quickly; but it may be harder to repair because more damage could be caused to an exposed cable than one hundreds of feet underwater. ("ANNEX A: PLAY I CATASTROPHIC DISN TERRESTRIAL OUTAGE", pp. 4-5)

I advocate Lambert-Beatty's parafictional model to be used as layered understanding for my own text, and autofiction in general, which Prof. Tougaw has made me aware to explicitly address. I desire to test a reader's critical capabilities to understand what is *wrong* about **Landing Points**, but more important to me is the process determining what is *right*. Parafictional models serve as good models for this latently ethical goal of forming *belief*; essential for modern writers, of whom Gibbs remarks operate in a relationship to the reader wherein *distraction* is the dominant mode of cultural

attention. Such a layered understanding can hopefully promote active, engaged relations for both readers and writers of texts; eliminating, or at least altering, a perceived tangential other.

I am excited to continue writing **Landing Points** with some degree of critical and creative support.

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PART TWO

LANDING POINTS

by

MATT BOYLE

“To My Cottage”

Thou lowly cot where first my breath I drew,
Past joys endear thee, childhood's past delight
Where each young summer's pictured on my view,
And, dearer still, the happy winter-night
When the storm pelted down with all his might
And roared and bellowed in the chimney-top
And pattered vehement 'gainst the window-light
And on the threshold fell the quick eaves-drop.
How blest I've listened on my corner stool,
Heard the storm rage, and hugged my happy spot,
While the fond parent wound her whirring spool
And spared a sigh for the poor wanderer's lot.
In thee, sweet hut, this happiness was proved,
And these endear and make thee doubly loved.

■ *John Clare*

The Notary's Seal

I

The hair sprouts inward to my head, producing a round, naked circle. I look down at what earlier was a loose dress shirt tucked about my waist now filled with stomach. I put my hands around and squish to see if it is real. It is. I look around the office. O no. Am I a demon? People come up and ask me questions. I respond with attentiveness. I care for them. The earth began in such a moment and I hope to encounter it soon again. In this way, I have begun my experience of limits. Whose flesh is this? Whose body is this? Who are you? I seem to be a figure of authority and so reflect all these questions into the answers I supply those gandering me. Hillside began the long association I have with this place. Men on the top floor do manual labor. I will describe to you why this is false. I do manual labor also. There is a pain shooting up my heart into my wrist. Although I have yet to see a Doctor, I imagine his response to quietly lambast the state of annoyance I imagine myself to be in, instead turning focus on the Glories of Life. I feel the desk I am sitting on, its calm, laminate Malaysian wood, the veneer of which is like petting a lion or sitting on the beach. I go often during the summer. Despite attempts, our genetics do not allow for repeated hours in the sun. The peeling skin then is a reminder of our ultimate insularity. Exposure! I must slather lotion on the bald head. I wish to sit on the beach in the hot sun for more than one hour. Perhaps over the weekend. Paper goes there. Day-after-day, I administer duties at the behest of the Boss. He is a large man with hair. Even outside his presence I feel an everlasting flow. Never before have I understood sleek, commercial reverberations as in this place. I write from the banks of devoured relations. You have been without caress too long. One thing I have learned from doing business is that while outward intention sells, dishonesty can be returned. Amazon gives us a hard time here. I hate Jeff Bezos, his lizard-eating face.

II

I should say the origin of all this blew from my Uncle, whose sad fall from the balcony of a middle-class public housing building ballooned me into the office across from Kentucky Fried Chicken set back from Jericho Tpke; of a furious peasant sort, we did not expect the financial windfall from his death to be the degree it was. In general, ignominious descriptors applied to his habit. I recall sitting to his left during meals. Rote recitation gave consumption a good and unfettered state. To inhale in this mode was one nice providence. Others too, but most significant of the influence I gathered was at these meals. And while I would often slip from the table before dessert to escape the oncoming onslaught against my small body, laid prostrate on the couch you could still examine from the conjoined room as he sat in the chair devouring. The focus Christopher derived in eating seemed perpendicular to the long, rambling sentences from his mouth before falling. Such attempts to deduce the world through linguistic function can leave one wasted. I prefer vague deficiencies. I was educated at a green liberal arts college in the Southern United States. Now here I am. I position myself so the glare of the Tpke is reduced on the color of my eyes, blindness' younger cousin. I do most of what I do on a computer screen tilted left so on a slant I face the glass building-front. What do I do? You also. The unrequired moment results in a sandwich, now spread before me as I begin to go about assigned duties. Steam twirls inside foil, inner contents absolved in a slight beckoning of moisture from the drive released when torn open, ruffled down. I put my face close, desiring the warm release. I am allowed exigencies inside this office others are not. I leave each day around four o'clock. Although management seems indifferent, I imagine this inspires dissension in my colleagues, whose rise I quell through disseminating unique bits of information as regards my living situation. I live behind that row of houses before you hit Loop Parkway. There are utopian elements to its design. Behind the garage, elevated up half a level, is the living room. This unique sitting place benefits from a sloped

cathedral surface overhead that covers its upper limit and faces the backyard. Behind the kitchen, and on the same level as the kitchen, is a den outfitted in wood paneling adjacent to the semi-elevated living room. There is also a formal dining space to the immediate right on entrance. Stairs of wrought-iron bannistering rise from the foyer to the living room, turn and continue to rise up to our second or third floor; your classification depends on the status of this intermediate living space. Either way, there you find bedrooms. The bedroom hallway is open to the stairs rising from the foyer, den, and living room. Sound has unusual properties in this home, bouncing around at will. Smaller three-bedroom examples exist, but ours is the more commonplace four-bedroom model. During Halloween, there was a psychiatrist who would not come outside and give candy. Instead, leaving the treats in a large bowl outside on her front step at the top of a set of stairs one had to concentrate going up, you began to mutate the origin of the treats while also being faced with a dilemma. When I was growing up, there were four families on the block including ourselves. There are more children now. Today, I waved to a man who was the father of one of the girls. Her name, Brittany; forever carved onto my mind. The new children may have had this experience deleted, as I am quite sure last Halloween I did not see the large bowl atop Dr. Prijilik's doorstep. Of course, there are infinite means to its expression. The dilemma ballooned walking up the steps, which one should do in pairs to avoid overcrowding and becoming a dangerous jumble. About fourteen months ago, I discovered she has been self-publishing some sick, saccharine verse. While not altogether bad, its general happiness felt ill-equipped for Tasks of the World. The indication of her profession hung on a sign drove into the ground of a decoration-less house covered in shrubs. A friend of my older sister, Brittany was kind during the odd pre-teenage portion of years, offering solid mass in walking to the bus or home from school. Brittany stayed after for many things, being a type of athlete, and I liked to see her even if we did not talk, a glance-and-wave out the window, or turn-around-and-yell from fifteen-to-twenty feet in front our steps. She lives on the bay side of

the street across from where I wave to her father, which was supposed to have been developed further into Reynolds Channel but never was, leaving unobstructed water views. Mr. O'Connell owns the funeral home in the peninsula my mother grew up in, and it was through his kindness we buried Uncle Christopher in a sure, convincing, and prudent manner.

III

The beachside tower whose bureaucratic esotericism Uncle Christopher learned to navigate has a prime line of sight into Southern Metropolis. Obtainable only in this smelly fish-mongering, I advocate ritual when a limit exists around the proposed constituents. Wandering the bottom end of Death Boulevard as it empties into unrestrained quarters, a homeless vagrant will enter into stores sometimes but for the most part is on the outside in areas surrounding commerce. For a long time I have been interested in figures such as this, even making missions to search out these people in different cities. Here, he is sleeping on a bench. Protection morphed into a threat. The bars grew around him and enshrine his form. The vagrant cannot be touched, while a beloved exits the scene. I continue. Our supermarket does not have the best produce, but convinces some otherwise. Once inside, he seems overcome. Customers pound through as the regular pace of shopping carts and scans click-beep for those married in the confluence. To lose small advancements attached to Plethora intensifies the anxiety one can feel inside a supermarket and makes decision impossible. You take a list. We move through King Kullen picking up things she has asked for and putting them in the metal cart being rolled through the aisles: Mrs. Fanning's Bread and Butter Pickles; an Entenmann's cake. I encounter the stained-glass. Spliced into fiction from its corporate whole, I imagine many content surprises in witnessing. Twins. Today is Wednesday, and I have been called into work due to the high volume of sales on one of our latest products: Pink All-state Notary Seal Embosser. I will describe the object for those unfamiliar: it is used to create raised impressions of

an official document requiring notarization. There is a cut on my hand that looks like a small ocean filled with lava. I see it on the knuckle of the middle finger growing up to a spot three-quarters of the pointer. I imagine Brendan traversing ~~over~~ the white to concentric hues of red and then into the present moment. Look around. There! I turn left, craning my neck to get a look over our lot. The residue of my egg sandwich hits me in the nostrils, averting these reveries. The wetness could be a hole into my insides for perilous exterior organisms looking to coagulate. I am land to them. My office is next to the Boss, a large man with hair, and I must admit under a kind of cloak I am in the habit of producing these little disquisitions for you. I understand the origin of this cut and do not wish to mystify. It has since crusted over and is now dry, allowing me to type in relative comfort. I fell, albeit from not too great a height. I get a rush doing it when I should not be. Always pleasurable. Always fun. And through the thickness of the combined interior lighting and images bouncing along Jericho Tpke, I feel the reflection lurking of a eunuch, his virgin throat mangling itself for the sake of words, reducing economic prospects so clean, unsexualized he lies marsh-preserved in ointment. You could take this road to where I live now in a small apartment. The prospect compels narration.

IV

Dreams are not dreams in the occidental glare of where I sit. From my position, I am in constant reference to who is entering or exiting as well as having a direct line of sight into the small kitchen. Weather brings us together. Our office is a square building with two floors, perhaps longer so as to require description as a rectangle. The rectangular building has two floors. I am on the bottom. People gather for intimate conversations. Sometimes I am mistaken for a receptionist. I am not. What do I do? Generations have been passed, lives given up so I could be presented such a choice. I see a sweater. There is a plethora of blood. I am awakened to the surroundings. Dive. Before

eternal coldness sets, consume a final bit of my sandwich. You cannot reheat egg sandwiches.

Writing goes well when I am aware I am being supervised. Touch me. Observe. The hardest part of anything to heat is the center; eggs, being the center of the animal, maybe not center as in literal core of its anatomical structure, but more the concentrated direction of energies fusing inside the organism for a period of time. Yes. Delicious. You can cook eggs fast. Slathered in ketchup, melt my cheese indirect over a grill impossible to emulate at home. Paper goes over there. Everyone drives; most on latitudinal planes. I was never supposed to live with a woman. A long duration does go on side some hills wrapping around the middle of where we live. We met on St. Brendan's Day, when History's random embrace reaches its pinnacle. I had leaked out a group heading to the bars, finding the sunshine to be gleaming and the potential for self-imposed gloom horrific; this celebration, normally occurrent on the first October Saturday, instead for a melding of political and religious institutions was moved onto the final September Saturday. Its attendant parade causes uninhibited drinking during daylight, while also being significant for confirmation of Celtic supremacy in North America. Also, earlier in the summer of that year I had returned from a liberal adventure in Germany unchanged in material circumstances, equally desirous to enmesh myself within the structures of my hometown. Whose blood? On one of the state blocks, I peel off into the shade. These little pockets of local color are fun. I am obsessed with owning specific entities. A fact that at the time was important, but is now dead.

V

There is a pencil-tip bore into my flesh also; I see it embedded in the palm of my right hand.

Turning it over to take a brief intermission from typing, examining my metacarpal float beyond the proximal phalanx, a voice coalesces from outside the cubicle, subtracting then adding the assessment that these children are lavished with an international character. I too have disappeared

under hastily arranged circumstances, turning up somewhere to be gazed-at and perhaps known. Linda lamented how the students would spend their Christmas. I have been in proximity to writers and artists. People of good-standing as well as those liking nothing more than an expulsive third rail. As a result of this desperation, a certain promising relationship did not develop along the course I wanted it to go, meandering instead into the role of an enthusiastic reader in relation to the sage author. Again, a demon engulfed me; where I, under the tutelage of my sage author, convince him through superior experience that existence is a sham, and we must cavort through an open, volatile range of emotion. Under the guise of a reporter for a small, liberal magazine, we met in a Berlin cafe. During this initial meeting, I am too enraptured in the logic of my own genesis to open the tape-recorder I brought and instead scribble some notes in imitation of a real reporter on the final page of a marble notebook. The self-reference is too much. V. comments on these exact details after I send the piece to him for approval. No merit-based seal is forthcoming, and with a fire venturing the undergirded threat of misrepresentation he could file in court replies in email that under no condition am I to send this thing for publication. I am crushed. Ugh. To be represented, become a character in one of these novels, even as a demon, was also an aspiration in opening the dialogue. I knew he was constructing one when we met at the cafe. I pour through the pages after ordering it from a clean, well-designed site looking for signs of an American. I find nothing. There is a relationship with a woman, but I know this had been in process before our initial meeting so am unable to analyze myself in the character. Nevertheless, it was still good to read with desire because it was fun to sit in Astoria Park after seeing C. and read. She is with me during a second meeting, while V. does a reading. Description of C. that night. His selected passage is from the new novel, a passage that in particular seems to reflect the peculiarities of all our relationships. The character hates his American girlfriend; wondering aloud whether solid boundaries such as national representation can account for her moral development, the belabored point is then driven home in

comparison between a couple with different views on littering. I was attracted to this exact passage. Her hair is a natural brown. She loves me. The thought culminates as the narrative voice observes love's power to flatten. I like to be flattened. I want to be a flat thing too. The growing nature of our love had made me nervous in his presence since we began to exclude others from entrance through its wrought-iron gates. Nostalgia's instant grip is disgusting. I know of not one-or-two married couples who go to bars with classic video games. Nothing is greater than the secret language developed between two lovers than that developed within love of yourself. This narcissistic desire is reflected in the language games of lovers. Special names no one else knows or is allowed to call the beloved because then the fiction destructs. We like fiction. The relation fails on introduction of a third. Such a design permeates our whole character so that he is reduced to a slobbering child.

VI

Generally, I spend time reversing the order of words; I have typed certain words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in sober administration of duties so many times doing it here feels uncontextualized, liberated, even as the words themselves remain the same. Our ship does battle selling against hordes of identical business. I had seen this before in a warehouse. That couple ran the place more resigned to dealing on the terms Fate presents, while my Boss takes up arms. We lob arrows from dry shores, pelting a firm exterior. You must be able to maintain multiple positions. I would lie on the beach's back, preferring to be in front of a large, abandoned home. She would not let me touch her lips or face even. I am glad to have seen her. She laughed. The image of a woman laughing at a man. She laughed at me. She laughed because what I said did not reverberate. I am a man. Truth could not be the recent ended relationship. She laughed on the U-Bahn. One situation is not desired. You want them all. I was sad. You go on the S-Bahn which is

unusual and return on the more linear U-Bahn. Commonplace description as a ring. Somewhere else. Deeper. Dig. I told about C. She was born on Christmas. More presents in celebration of something besides herself. Developmental effects. I remember her on the bus. I did not believe she equaled me. Smile stops. We continue. The arms and legs of people I loved belonged inside. Not her big room. Not a floor. Not in the rich easternmost Catholic communities of the island I grow up in I would become obsessed with entering at a later stage (this I did not tell); not as my legs were spread the game where C. rolls a ball. After some comedic performance she would do it softer and I would let it miss, hitting between the spread legs.

VII

For the past two nights, I've awoke in the morning with long scratches, not very deep; the first on my neck, and the other continuing after a break on the anterior side, curving off onto my front. I turn to face the mirror and examine this plenitude, its accumulation frightening me due to the mysterious source, but also invigorating participation in a most necessary ritual. Self-production is impossible. I gaze at myself in the mirror and strike a pose accentuating the features I find sexual; lower hips jut out, my face devolving into spirited resilience. Monday, Tuesday. Today is Wednesday, a day of my own making. Through invoking one of the previous mentioned exigencies, I am allowed an additional day of rest. At four-thirty, Boss puts his head down, showing me the conversation is over, and begins to ruffle around some things on his desk then graze over his phone. Verbal agreement in place, I walk out his office with a profound sense of realignment. Never before have I felt the secure basis of commerce pelt through me anew as it does in this building. Sometimes I see myself at a later age balding in the uniform, circular pattern indicative of a monk. I order people around in a similar environment. You are there too. Paper goes everywhere; I take possession of the building, liberating our spirits while creating a maximum of

economic growth. As it seemed a fine conclusion for destinies built atop one, long plot of land extending one-hundred-eighteen miles, I had thought about ending in Montauk. Hear the screech of the Atlantic. Be joyful in my speech's contingencies. Ameliorate fresh pine tree scents; converge notions of bay and ocean. But a number of things went wrong. There was that man coming back from the Hamptons in the diner. Gross. There was tendrils of booger, snot which hung from his nose as he loomed above you in your seat to take your order. If you did not want a joke to happen, he would do it anyway. Mumbled a bit. Excused himself from dealing with us after the act was over. We were in good spirits from having escaped a decaying structure and were good for any human contact, even this nasty man. Is that all I have to say? I could go longer. So I will. This type of gross Englishman seems to revel in the nasty aspects of life. Normally, this would not offend me. But you are a waiter. Perform your station. Leave the Hamptons if you do not want to be there. This is all easy. I have trapped myself in places, am trapped in the room I am in right now with the high walls and fireplace. ENGAGE YOUR ENTRAPMENT OR ESCAPE, I would say to this man, but he has figured it out, and he has been trapped, and so are you, at Fairway Restaurant!

A Banshee

VIII

His bench is contained on a splotch of green in the middle of the street. A barometer of neighborhood interest, Death Boulevard is the quixotic, local name for the main thoroughfare which creeps on a democratic slant into Metropolis. The island differentiates our neighborhood from a Southern reference. I imagine us correcting certain faults of character found in the novel and choosing one another despite it all. Soon we are going over the bridge. You can cross the street. The island helps. You notice his bench sometimes in the middle of Death Boulevard. The malignant name has been exorcised of the force it retains when heading in the opposite direction towards Metropolis. Demons. There is calmness perhaps resulting from the raised land. Things seem new from this angle. You can go in the other direction. So that is where I am. Cross.

IX

Strangely, what Uncle Christopher looked over was a peninsula desiring representation as an island. It loves to define itself in series of antitheses, gas of the Outer Boroughs; I lived there too for years in the home of my grandmother, a fine woman whose sweet hand looms above all I write. She is concerned with the question of whether or not you are major or minor. I invite her to read John Clare and she does so. Her review is positive except to compare him to Hopkins. Clare fails on this account because his words are not adequately directed towards God. She makes mention of Our Lord as a tangible presence in the room we are sitting in as light streams in the plastic shutters through the kitchen. Clare is able to grasp the sign of these things but not what their signification is. Superior in intelligence and faith Hopkins does so. He produces much the same words as Clare but with the addition of its reference outside of itself to a creative font. This is what makes it superior to most scholars, including E. The references are deeper. It offers itself to richer analysis.

An attuned listener can find subtle shades of meaning unfold over time. I am more attracted to Clare. I fetishize his direct simplicity and do not disavow it on this account. He sees more than he listens. The utter state of privacy from which he creates is joyful rather than fretted about in sorrow. He is able to be alone in the metaphysical but not in the tangible present. The light streams in only when he is surrounded by another with whom he has relations. Hopkins preserves a monastic loneliness in the present to create an extensive union with God. His metaphysics are joyful in their aloofness from the world. Clare ends his days wandering the country-roads looking for love lost. So Clare is classed as minor. Good. But minor.

X

Only as a matter of respect for the function he seemed to have served in the previous generation did we call Christopher Uncle, his being my grandmother's brother. I had been placed in her care for determined periods of time starting my eighth year of life, extending until the eleventh, while a funny amalgamation of speech, Upper Middle Class, more consistent to our financial incline, confirmed. Through these moments, I am ingratiated into what rose before as twin alien structures jutting into the background of my young life. You see. There was a large pile of disused building materials we would have fun in I imagined from somewhere disconnected. Metropolis. I would pretend this was another world and the cousins I was with as allies fighting against another world hostile to us. You could find a broken television or hollowed out concrete slab. His appearance renders him unidentifiable. Dance around dead letters. Lines being inscribed through our little heads understood in mute even if sometimes one can see protruding structures laze on an orange horizon, it was not me or what should be considered us. Nevertheless, a sort of protection was due; its mouth needing food, and we the sacrificial belongings due for dissolving in the acidic stomach of the Outer Boroughs. She wants more. I see them in the neighborhood we live in now. Points. Be

a flounder hooked from the bottom of my own body of water, filleted, brought home and tossed in flour; part of the system of peculiarities I myself am cited for. Or a golden yoke broke through the region's sand. Each granule warmed over the following day. Get covered in this mass and bake. Sizzle under Threat of Persecution, its always-active eyes marked by funny indentations in the sand, tire-treads created by the marauding rescue vehicles. Sliced thick like cake given out at family gatherings, these tire-treads became perilous signs for those, like myself, who lay too unaware on the beach's back. Get up. Go down to the shore. Wrap your head in the ocean. Abscond. Do simple, round things. Prepare Chana Masala. Yes, I still work at the office on Jericho Tpke. Three-or-four generations down the line, resistance bleeds ridiculous. At first, work repelled me. However I did not budge, letting it wash me over, here processed in fine humor. You must come and see the clams. I do not consume fish. The clams at this time of year begin to grow and by the end of summer will be abundant enough so as you sift through moist, shoreline sand it will feel like millions of small bodies with tongues out and searching. Desire is the slobbering child. Perhaps if you hold the wet lump of sand you will also be able to feel the young clams and laugh because when they dig eventually the tongues hit your hand, the epithelial layer of which is too hard to penetrate. So all you feel are thousands of tongues licking you when they are desperate and trying to get underground and escape from gulls. The gulls wait on the shore, float in water, and above in air. When writing about a relationship that ended badly, I would sometimes go over across the street from where I lived at the time, where I grew up, to be surrounded by these creatures doing odd swirling motions. I am notified it is possible to find good produce in our supermarket. You see gulls outside on the lightposts? The mother of the cousins I'd play with sees cormorants along the power lines leading to Costco. That pile of shit brought more joy than a whole playground. She let me have some notebooks from Uncle Christopher's apartment. An advocate of these scaled stores, it is possible he bought them as part of a bulk series. I have three. They are red.

My notes are more considered than what I do under the wings of my Boss. Or when I am alone producing for automatic glee. 1998. We met at an age, twenty-three, when people begin to only play games they can win. Despite remonstrations otherwise, humans you thought were you begin to not know each other and move in circles. Our circles overlap, but the absolute center you are forever wanting microwaved remains cold. Beep. You will be satiated.

XI

Someone from Metropolis comes. You won't let me drown, will you? She leans forward with her weight and pulls. No, but there are some things you should learn. Oh. Yea? They walk beside miniature cliffs formed from succeeding pushes and pulls. The ocean is close enough. I am reminded of Normans. Sea creatures piled in green muck at its base. The smell. They hop up over this boundary onto hot sand and continue walking until arriving at where two beach chairs, a bag, four shoes, and some clothes draped over the chairs are hammered into the sand. So says a gale-force wind. Oh, no. What? She points to the cloth bag, now leaning a lethargic right angle. A gull runs off with a green plastic bag. That, he says. On cartoon legs, their nature lacks evidence as when bent in the air creating motions one only feels due to dark, a swirling matrix out of which clams and the day's heat move in tandem. The beach transforms into a big animal, and I its creature. Other Calibans too. Behind the cat-o-nine-tails grass and dunes spurting out its teenage face. My irrelevance consumes me. Before the parking lot. Soft avocados dance with hard ones. Tomatoes too. Also the body I inhabit, because it is tough employing the same nerves in consistent latitude for extended periods. To define oneself in terms of repugnancies, the morass of things you find easy opposition towards was for a long time the simple way in which I defined myself. I am more than a negative. A harmless index. As that mean Doctor advised, Pain has upside. I no longer feel disattached from the orifices of my arms, out which before leaked noodles into the tangible

world, and bang out words with the solid precision of a craftsman. People need repetition. We are great machines. I have good intelligence responsive to its environment. Others not so much. No less! Respect. Here is something to do. I must segment out duties so the calm festooning over this office on Friday when I bring in doughnuts or a piece of equipment malfunctions and renders shipping labels unprintable stays. One of my own unique peculiarities; I enter “77” in the character field for all boxes on the forms I design; God’s number, and hope the subtle impact of its angelic feet barraging against the consumer has an effect. Demon! I believe it does. Writing beyond these dry banks retains something of the rote, mechanical feeling I get in administration of my duties; there is a supplement you wrap around the wrist for additional support. I feel her eyes while typing, enraptured. As Linda nears, I connect more to the screen, making sure to imbibe whatever is present. Floating beyond identifies a disposition I seek to avoid in this environment. Tall, skinny stumps begin to compress with the land itself, before evaporating off the easternmost tip into the Atlantic. You could drive east and smell fresh pine trees. Take Jericho. Yes, that is me as you drive horizontal on this plot of earth extending one-hundred-eighteen miles, lounging out the car eating cold noodles in a spicy Asian peanut sauce prepared for Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday lunches. Maybe you see me going west in a further lane with your head turned left, closer to Milano Fine Men’s Fashion. People go in for fittings all the time. You could be going either of these directions. I need you, but there is no way for you to know the spicy Asian peanut sauce I made, its being impossible to perceive from a car speeding along Jericho Tpke.

XII

The LIE goes over an exposed glacial back. I used to not know directions and felt pride in doing so by believing it would somehow obscure sacred knowledge of my innermost self. I was wrong. The opposite is true. You are allowed to place yourself within space and feel yourself as real and in

relation to others and the other things people call home. And your home becomes more beautiful. Or at least understood. And the people and things you use to inhabit this place illuminate. In glowing splendor it is easier to tell who is who and what is what. I drive north after coming horizontal. Coming up from the South Shore gives my presence an air of layered exoticism. I am alien, foreign. The first memory of life I have is of a house. There is a set of cups and plates, dinnerware we have in the front room of our house, the exterior of which is being undone right now for obscure reasons which somehow relate to house value as well as competitive ambition with the neighbors, and the dining room faces out on the front lawn, well-cut but not professionally done, where we will sometimes set up for dinner when the occasion merits use of the cups and plates. So, I had invited a friend down to my hometown, a blue-collar beachside town, to eat, laugh, enjoy the sun, see my origins, and to also allow him some respite from the city, which can be a monstrous thing. He was enjoying himself, doing the aforementioned activities, laughing, drinking, being in the sun, examining who I was and had become, or still was, and there was no need for the dinnerware. We did not eat from the paper plates and plastic utensils, which we will sometimes use on these occasions of relaxed intimacy, but metal forks and spoons, and the nice laminated plates. Although I did find it to be strange, eating from a material not quite the cups and plates in the dining room case, which a woman named Doyle who worked in the rectory bought as a wedding gift for my mother, Waterford Crystal, and not the disposable paper and plastic usually accorded to the occasion of an early summer barbeque, perhaps as it proceeds we will use the paper and plastic.

XIII

She sees the bird. Laughs. Oh no. I never liked those chips. Wise Sour Cream & Onion. Torn apart by beaks. You know it is Spring in where I am from, these blue-collar beachside places whose definition I find hard to amend in corporate situations, opening onto unwanted soliloquies, when

older, larger clams slam into the pavement. You look up. I have never heard of anyone being injured in one of these explosions. Surprising. Not even a myth. Anyway. The big shells open for the gulls to get the meat inside. For four years he had been trying to teach her to swim. The desire is not there. He was here during the first hurricane. Her head looks funny in the little ocean. I see it bobbing, weaving in the seaweed. Our beach morphs into a green blob. The seaweed desecrates the weekend. She gets out. She got in because it was hot. The beach was hot. If the beach is hot, she goes in the water. Honorable. Even an unpleasant green mass does not deter her. Until entering. Then in the shallows she felt. Ighuck. Gross. She falls down. The water was a little rough and hit ankles. I watch her from the beach. I come in.

XIV

Metropolis is full of poor swimmers. Someone comes each year. See the gulls on the lightposts?
Join me.

The first time you meet someone other than yourself, a ball begins to roll, and the ball keeps adding

When I was younger, we would go out during threat of a hot storm to be battered by waves. Your body being tossed along a plentitude felt good, the only logical response in such a situation being to give up control. Your body reduced to a mannequin, your mind is now let free to wander in pleasant solitude. These brief moments we looked forward to.

So ball yourself up when a waves comes, a relaxed ball, bearing no indecision. Oceans feast on indecision.

Keep tactile, limp, strong, ready to bounce from the bottom if need be, and a word I have always been attracted to: lymphatic

Wash up, breathe in the air, and laugh with each other. This is how you swim.

Domestic Indices

XV

And then I walked up and turned left down E. Park Avenue. There is something which describes a new energy of form or emotion. And I went over to Morelli's. He lives on Washington Boulevard. As I walked out of Long Beach High School, the wind was cold and blowing off the bay or ocean in indeterminate directions. I was glad to have had the mask. It made me feel like a terrorist. Also utilitarian. Perhaps this is not how we talk. You reserve that for friends and family. Official business. So what. There is a pulsating feeling in my blood sympathetic to methods of force and smiles on non-adherence to peace. Wait. Management hopes customers select bad produce. Be willing to withstand stares. Force a reset. Deeper in is E. Park Wine & Liquor. Its proprietor stood behind the raised counter and spoke with a man by the window looking out on the avenue. I was there to buy a Sangiovese. I wanted a specific wine to cook a meal but also to drink. Now turning left to face me, he inquired how I could use help and moved from behind the counter to find us the requested bottle. A spirit excited me. I take two leftovers from previous days which would be devoid of taste, destitute alone, and combine into one acceptable meal, in fact more than acceptable, leaving me in quite a state after having lunch. I fly home under the aegis of this food and a large Styrofoam cup of the remaining coffee-pot coffee from earlier in the morning. I am taken through the afternoon on the wings of these substances along with a small, cold walk to enlighten the senses. Never losing sight of Jericho during, so that I make it back to my desk within ten minutes. I will be honest. What I aim to give you, dear reader, is some account of how I came to be sitting again at this desk. How my hair recedes and a stomach protrudes. Bulbous orbs of destination! Use bathroom. But to get something also. I want things. I have melded the excessive desires of the Cult of Youth to presuppose limits and what one is capable to do on them. The calm

desk, its Malaysian overtones laminate the abilities of button-pressing colleagues. Just above me right now I hear their voices: the first lined with husk of age, pressing against dilution of energy; then the respondent, younger than I am, flecked with the tinges, gash of early bilingualism. I face east and crane my neck north to get a look out the big three-paneled bay window looking out on the Turnpike. I also must turn south sometimes to observe the building's interior as the combined glare of low-grade LED and sun astounds. Wires plugging into the hard-drive forced this conclusion, as well as the idea it would be pleasurable to stare at the lot in front the building set back from Jericho. I choose to go without glasses. The practical idea being glasses do not improve eyesight, rather are destructive of it, and instead force a dependence you would otherwise reflect inward. Mutation segregates.

XVI

I can recall being in bed and accessing the internet, amazed at the potential for us in the world. Too bad time is not ours. Continuous disheveled faces. The splanck conforms to neither of the architectural models on which its name amalgamates. Boundaries are futile. This couple laughed at me. I was outside a club. In English, I attempted to enjoin people to share the drugs. Feeling this as a correct method to meet friends under the alien circumstances, I dove into my pockets on seeing their joyous response. Not hard drugs, mind you, but the soft, fluffy drug that is meant to be shared. Their joy was more in the interaction we could have, as previous rejections and evocation of myself as a villain had devolved into the comedy of a distressed salesman. The game continues. He tugs away and meets the young couple, from one of Berlin's outer regions for which I do not have the correct descriptive word. I want to say boroughs, but that sounds too English. Anyway, the couple accepted the weed and shared a smoke and some laughs. It turned out to be all I was after for the moment. We come about once a month, they said. Their dress mildly alternative, although with a

flair for the practical matters of life I find respectable. I addressed my own condition in relation to where I am from. So why do you come to Berlin, they asked. You should go where you are from. There are no malice in these words. Although on repetition of this same story to a cosmopolitan friend, the one who visited me in my hometown, he did not ascertain my point in telling it to him and began to disparage the couple as small-minded yokels; again, I do not want to leave this impression, but rather I consider the advice of the couple on the grounds I received kindness at a moment I wanted nothing more than to be dug up, drove into the ground, and buried under plants far outside the things I had ever seen, thought to have seen, or imagined so far in my small, pickled life.

XVII

You could end in Orient Point. Fragrant scents awake. Regulate the power to control with the power to love. I say regulate because the relation is not an exact inversion. Love does not control. Having done so, I am capable to leave around four o'clock and return to the figure of the vagrant. Indissoluble even at the tailend of commerce, where vigorous bodies go pounding in the supermarket, his particles linger for introspection. He assails me. I am in the small apartment. C. is sleeping. I am beside a window that looks out of our place on the first floor, allowing just enough light so when the shade is drawn up above the lower pane both our desires are satisfied. She sleeps. This is a normal habit allowing me enough time to write and produce dinner before C. goes off to work. Tonight, I only reformat an earlier version into tacos on corn tortillas: Jackfruit Mole, with eccentric toppings; at least, that is what we've been told. Across Death Boulevard, in process of being demolished is a 24-hour diner. An agreement was once hashed out over food. Plates of potatoes, eggs, and toast. I regulate myself day-after-day on some variation of the following: coffee, Niacin, coffee. The initial coffee can be substituted for a tea, and also the latter, while the

Niacin can be removed completely or taken earlier, but never after multiple coffees. Then it produces an unsightly redness. My fear is that I am a demon. After Wednesday, an orange soda or Coca-Cola can sub for the latter. The clear piss of a bureaucrat leaked out me in a slight tinge of coffee after entering the home of my parents. I emerge into their kitchen for dinner. Legal restitution for haunting injuries sustained during a Death Boulevard collision. Uncle Christopher's obscure vault combined. Put on a precipice, we purchase the house. I held a car, a small toy car, one of which I had been reaching for from inside a black pack emblazoned with a logo waisted around my mother's hips. As she stood analyzing, her powers of retention were strong, and moved to give the object from inside this waisted pouch to her son, maintaining conversation and eye contact with the current owner. Originating on our westernmost jurisdiction, the splanch is neither a ranch, obvious reference to the wide-open, rural spaces predominant to the white-and-blue collared eastern regions before Long Island's extravagant tip, nor that generic admittance to the strained circumstances of housing round Metropolis: the split level.

XVIII

I continue the fiction alive at work to maintain the conditions of the oral agreement with my Boss. Without its veil I am no longer a child in full support by my parents, a piece of information against which certain personality faults such as my permanent lateness could be held against and result in the diminishing of this writing as more severe forms of accountability surveil me. My production is almost unlimited when buttressed with periods of consumption. Steam rose from a pot of sauce-covered spaghetti. Nearly tearing the flesh off his skin turning the cap of soda, my father put the bottle down on the kitchen-table. He winks. I grab a glass. I am out of habit drinking soda, but not coffee. Since I began genuine work inside an office, the necessity of coffee has become apparent. I consume multiple per day. It might also amuse one to know of a debate on July 24, 1959. Well, not

exactly the same. You have to follow some weird records. But the same firm is constructing houses at a later date, still imbued with fertile, economic sense. Our house was built during the 1970s. There are utopian elements to its design. We won. Perched. Home. Organs of Metropolis come to rest. Nevertheless, our location always impinges with Threat of Persecution. Or at least extreme mutability. On top I felt like Brendan, riding what had been presumed vacant land. Two Towers bore itself high above the skyline. You can build them there because of the bedrock. Visible at certain times on a clear day, being denied outdoor recess and the sensible, aggressive games children like seemed a violation towards such a votive hinged on the horizon. Instead, we play Table Football. I remember laughing. One boy with enough hand-dexterity would craft a flat, triangular ball from sheets of paper with enough leverage to be knocked about by the knuckles of an enclosed fist. Paper is everywhere. The goal was to move the ball from one edge of the desk to another while using enough subtle touch so in four or less turns the ball peaked over the edge. You could choose to flick the triangular ball with your fingers through an upright joint of the opposing player's hands for less points if that seemed more desirable too.

XIX

Perhaps Saturday. Your house was a boat. Nothing stands out. The American girlfriend wanders around. Despite construing itself as an island, the geographical features of where I spent the years under care of my grandmother do not allow for such a definition. Hulled to the earth rather than floating away, a peninsula attaches itself to land, albeit using obscure manners. I met a European writer, who will remain nameless, but who preferred to be called European. The strong cultural image he presented of Europe was founded, among other things, within his denial of being called a writer, an open space for various identifications, but denial of being called a writer. Favoring representation through a diminutive, he had nothing of the weak, melancholic disposition of others

I imagined regard themselves like this, such as in a novel he wrote, as bourgeois affliction. V.'s original rose me from a long doze and cast off the string of associations that results in the Berlin café. These feel like odd semantics to someone uningratiated to the tribe, but for me, clinging to a green notebook, upon whom so many benefactions had placed true chance inside, I gathered from him strength to return.

XX

Is the perfect weather for a nap in the car. A silver Hyundai with good gas mileage, under the sum of my influences to seek our prospective pieces of land to buy. There is an old church in the town of Sag Harbor. The church is on a shaded street off from the bustle of Main Street. Slaves and colonists enclosed together. A bit of raised land here too. Old Burying Ground. I peek over the high fence developers put up. The digital representation online outlined the church's gorgeous residential interior. Some trees drop nuts on the sidewalk. The plot itself is small. I can only peer in patches, as I must stand on the top of my toes for a few seconds before relaxing down and again being without sight into the yard. The development is promising. Blood! I am told this is good, but go on shivering. Does she love me? I am examined with passionate interest, eyes gauging whether the assigned duties are engaged. There is cold in my bones. If anything changes, I will be upset. You do not detest the surroundings. Change is for organisms who cannot mediate themselves into such fine forms. I have amended myself so completely, so without contest, everything glows. All of it. So I go around handing out my resume. Madison Street. Posture. Conform. Sip. Read. I do this and am brought some sustenance. Driving near where I live for the moment, the small apartment, I notice a lawyer's office bearing the name Abogado. Night. I am launched into reverie that I have been here before and this feeling is a source for the comfort I feel moving around this certain region; an illusion vindicated after rehashing with my poor parents, ignorant of the legal world's strange calculations, its passive relational tide, although holding enough good, rational sense to

procure this Abogado's service. Be comforted by my own experience of related anxieties. I brought Uncle Christopher some grapes. The idea of fruit seemed to invigorate him. He sat up in bed alert and less resigned. Metropolis made him angry; its reduction of people to a time and place. Yet here I was. Phantasms rip, tear into the porous holes of reality; what Abogado calls extortion. Devil. This fiction of violence, a vague, almost sacred blossom audible only by those within the sphere of its divining. My horror was an initial shield on identification. Look. We are all attached. There is a large cell everyone goes in. Time lapses in such an environment. Be invisible, make no friends. A scuttle of interactions over the telephone corded to the wall. Free, unlimited, this could be a source of friction between us.

XXI

Her plangent feet sink into the earth. Let the water come. A cable goes underneath where we are to Plérin, Côtes-d'Armor.

The color of our family eyes are blue and when they spill out it spills everywhere.

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