

MICHAEL ESTABROOK

100 COLORFUL PLASTIC PIECES

(for Kerry)

1961 was a difficult Christmas: my brother Kerry poked his eye with a stick had to wear a patch he hated worse than death. & Dad although we didn't know it then had the cancer growing inside eating him up inside. & my other brother was still wetting the bed & God did that ever make Dad upset. & me well I fell over into the tree while reaching to hang an ornament slipped off the old green vinyl hassock with the rips taped over with masking tape & crashed into our beloved tree. then Mr. Watts from across the street fell into our tree too. he was reeling stinking drunk & fell right down on Kerry's brand new Mr. Machine breaking it into 100 colorful plastic pieces.

DARKNESS

oh what to know, what to think.
I don't know what to think. who can know?
is it possible for us to persist in this steely darkness?
(good question. perhaps the only question:)
this eternal darkness all around, lapping at us incessantly.
will we emerge? & where?

from the continuum or from some other place in time?
yet we must, we must overcome this enveloping darkness, this damned
perpetual darkness, ever-swelling, ever-lapping -- its cold brittle knives, cutting,
jabbing, breaking beneath our skin like broken needles.
botched tattoos. failed injections.

I'm confident (I think) that we shall overcome.
we have to.
what's left if we don't? nothing.
(a dreaded fearful word, nothing. don't you think?)
but what about you?
are you confident? optimistic?

who are you?
why are you here, staring at me like this?
are you me or simply you?
I'm me, & I'm you, & I'm us --
it has to be that way you see.
oh don't you see? you must.

I see empty space on the shore, there on the shore, there, above those serpentine
lines drawn so clear in the sand.

do you see?
oh perhaps it's
merely a flicker of light from a cruel, impatient heaven;
a momentary flash in this deadly quiet, pervasive murk.
but there, see that ledge or dock or rock?
a place for us to catch onto, pull ourselves up & out; a place for us to be, truly be;
new beginnings at last in the light, in the soft light, away from all this darkness,
for awhile at least.

for awhile.

The Schizophrenic Medicine

The doctor prescribed something for my pain,
for my chronic back pain. And after taking it
for some time I noticed how good it made me feel
less pained, certainly, and even somewhat happy. So I
took out an old PDR from 1991, the one my brother Todd
sent up to me from Florida. And I found the drug in there
and it listed the side effects, which were dizziness,
sedation, nausea, vomiting and elation.

Elation! So it's official, this pill is making me feel
better, not only physically, but mentally too. That's nice,
that's a freebie. But I wonder what it means, what I should
think, that there's a warning attached to this which states:

*Do not prescribe propoxyphene for patients who are
suicidal.* It seems peculiar that someone could be elated and
suicidal at the same time.

JOY HARJO'S PAGES

Through most of my reading of
The American Poetry Review
a tiny translucent tea-colored beetle
rested peacefully on my hand.
He seemed to be sleeping,
his head down on my warm skin,
except during Joy Harjo's pages.
He likes her straight words and her
saxophone and her long
dark hair flowing like a horse's mane,
curling and twisting
and leaping out off her head.
Then he flew away.

In the "Makers of Modern Poetry" Class

She's writing "POUND – CANTOS, 3-15-2002"
on her clean white Harvard University tablet.
I notice the skin making her eyelids
is so so thin, a tiny slight blue vein curling down
above her dark eyes, like a smoky trail
through the snow, as the instructor states
in her strong, compelling voice, "Pound and Eliot
drew great inspiration from the past, both
the historic and the mythologic past."
And I'm wondering why
the pretty student in front of me,
the one with the eyelids, didn't
jot that down like I did.

bio:

I'm a Marketing Communications Manager
for a tiny division of a gigantic billions-of-dollars company,
and man, going into an office every day can be excruciating.
The stuffy air, the florescent lights are killing me.
Thankfully I can retire in 10 or 15 years.
But I still think that somehow
I've got to get myself on some boat
collecting phytoplankton, or into the rich brown hills of Montana
searching for TRex bones. Then again maybe I simply
should've stayed on Northfield Avenue where I belong
and learned to fix cars like my Daddy did.