

Poems by *John Poch*

The Shadow Men

The cedar shakes at evening took on
 an Edward Hopper glow, broken
 with the hard-edge shadows he made
 famous in paint. These shadows fled
 because of the hill a half-mile west.
 Shooting hoops was perfect: when I missed,
 sometimes, the ball careened toward
 the house, its downward sloping yard.
 Retrieving the ball, I'd pause, stand stunned
 at each new lack of light and want
 to miss this way again. I did,
 and further, into the flower bed
 against the house, but not on purpose.
 It was there I heard the scratching, nervous,
 coffin-trapped, from under the shakes.
 I guessed a bat when I heard the shrieks
 stretching from some daydream trauma.
 I was sure when I saw the guano
 in the bed below. I sat in the grass
 and waited, watched the little claws
 reaching out from between the shakes,
 then back in, not ready to wake.
 A different kind of cave and dark
 (out of de Chirico's early work)
 poured over the scene as when one dreams
 and wakes, slowly, and swallows the dream.

No neighbors, but if there were, they'd think-
 Affected poet, worshipping
 his house! He ought to mow the lawn.
 Quick glances toward the high hill-gone
 were the pinks and oranges of before,
 gone the long cloud-edge of fire.
 I thought, I can hardly see or hear.
 I tilted a little forward for fear
 I wouldn't clearly catch him catch
 the air; his claws shimmied the edge
 of the shake, a wing struggling his body
 must have been disjointed and putty-

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soft to have fit. I blinked. He dropped
like that and caught the dark with soft
skin wings thin as a human eyelid.
Another scrambled down and fled,
and then eight more. I watched them pivot
about the yard about a minute,
another shadow coming on,
the full moon cold and high and strong.

To Glass

The dance next door with a dumbbell full of sand.
The girl across the lawn holds, in her hand,
suspended time. Her parents plant a tree.
Small shoulders pull against the gravity.
Her heavy dance: a shadow-laden reader
new to the window tax repeal, sun-feeder.
The neighbors hear her reeling--how she hellos
goodbyes and leans back like the humming cellos.

Cleaning the windows makes me feel like a god.
The scene out there is over when my breath
fuzzes. I roam the house to clean, feel odd.
O mirror, soldier full of holes, the spray
I spray on me, a candidate for death.
My teeth are stones around a flame I say.

John Poch is the director of creative writing at Texas Tech. His first book is called *POEMS*. He is the editor of *32 Poems Magazine*.