

Morri Creech

The Road

1.

I met the past
on a country road

out where the poor
bury their dead

it was after dark
the house I sought

wore the mist
like an overcoat

where are you going
he said to me

the briar bush
the house the lea

the stars too all
are fugitive

the backward look
is how you live

2.

So I followed him
breath on the air

trailed behind
me like despair

and I could hear
those several winds

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that helped the means
achieve the ends

from the fool's oath
to the wise decree

to the proud tower
to the gallows tree

I asked him for
his name he said

I am the wormwood
the bitter bread

3.

The past grinned
to show me all

the raftered bones
that built the fall

the promises
that led to grief

like tent worms
on a locust leaf

those dividends
that drove the lash

and sunk the soldier's
boots in ash

the things I saw there
struck me dumb

my own town burned
his kingdom come

4.

He held midnight
in his hands

the dark was his
to give commands

he conjured up
the Spanish fleet

that bore abroad
the spirochete

Hiroshima
as it stood before

the blind breach
at the atom's core

plant your shovel
deep in lime

he said you'll prize
some founding crime

5.

His hand unlocked
the masks I'd worn

to hide myself
since I was born

the awkward kid
without a cent

at twenty-five
turned arrogant

the drunk who stared
in an empty cup

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and the rake who turned
his collar up

but when I asked
which one was me

no turn of phrase
would twist the key

6.

I said to him
I've had enough

he reached and grabbed
me by the scruff

boy he said
though you're still here

with every breath
you disappear

the future's just
a tightening noose

and no one
can snatch you loose

I am your compass
your north star

I am the nothing
that you are

7.

I looked ahead
and traveled on

three times a rooster
signaled dawn

the house I sought
was a few steps more

my shadow stretched
to the front door

the road behind
seemed like a spool

of thread unraveled
by a fool

then someone said
you've found the place

it was his voice
it was my face

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Twilight

The sun is a streak of peach across the lake,
moon a gown of gauze caught in the trees.
Between the spigot and the garden rake
the spider spins its tenuous trapeze.

*

Truth is on hold. Philosophers, take note:
a barn dissolves into the muffling mist.
The solid world slips off on Charon's boat
to vex the dreams of the materialist.

*

Though honeybees retreat into the hive
and lilies' throats constrict at close of day,
the best of fates is still to be alive
for all the honeyed words the ancients say.

*

Too late for work. Too early yet for bed.
The window's rinsed with gold but one can see
the consummation of what lies ahead
as, slowly, light revokes its sole decree.

*

At dawn and dusk the future meets the past.
The stars, for all they govern, irk the mind —
those glittering dice the universe has cast
on the empty baize by which they are defined.

*

No sound for miles. Not even a hint of wind.
The swing sets in the local park are still.
It's like the quiet calm at supper's end
shortly before the waiter brings the bill.

*

To make the morning is to unmake night,
whatever else one chooses to believe.
It's darkness that first said Let There Be Light —
the great creator with Nothing up its sleeve.

*

Have twilit meanings spun between the lines
not always been the subject of the text?
The maker gets snared in his own designs:
from word to world, one sentence to the next.

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Burning the Leaves

Dad wheelbarrows the leaves into the ditch.
November and the ground is tinged with frost,
air heavy with smoke, the autumn colors rich.
He squints at the camera looking vaguely lost.
Mom leans against the handle of her rake
next to the trailer thinking God knows what,
as though the day were just some big mistake.
A marriage and prim lawn are what she's got,
plus a kid who whizzes by on roller skates,
small at the road's edge but there all the same.
She looks at something far away and waits.
The years crowd in around the picture frame.
The dead leaves at her feet keep piling higher
and, in the background, you can see the fire.

Search Engine

I'm the new catalog of creation.
I'm the nexus of peace and jihad.
I'm the shrine of late night masturbation.
I'm the postmodern version of God.

For each dexterous click of the fingers
I'm a smart algorithm grown wise.
I appeal to both left and right wingers.
I can see behind every disguise.

I'm a cursor just waiting to tell you
the thing that you most want to know.
I can show you the blueprints to Bellevue.
I can help you make plenty of dough.

Do your night sweats mean you have cancer?
Are you worried that mole has changed shape?
For each question I have the right answer.
For each mousetrap I have an escape.

Here's a formula for nuclear fission
and directions for baking a cake.
Here's how to make a decision
when it's late and you're still wide awake.

I can help you sustain an erection.
I know all your secrets by heart.
I can influence a public election
and interpret your medical chart.

I'll soothe you when you feel defeated.
Believe me. Just pick up the phone.
I'll tell you all you've ever needed.
I'll tell you your life is your own.

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Cape Cod Evening

Edward Hopper, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in.

The way she folds her arms across
her waist while evening closes in

as though she bears some private loss
she'll have to grieve alone again,

the way he reaches out to call
the dog that will not come, that stands

in deep grass at the edge of fall
and turns away from his commands —

even the way the house looks bare,
its windows giving on to no

bland views of couch or Frigidaire
or any comforts we might know,

or the way shadows pool around
those trees which seem to vanish fast,

burrowing root-hairs in the ground
like something buried in the past —

makes us believe they won't last long,
this couple painted years ago.

Autumn is one way things went wrong.
The fallow grass awaits the snow.