

8-2009

**till**

Jonathan Peter Moore  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

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TILL

by

Jonathan Peter Moore

Bachelor of Arts  
Rhodes College  
2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing  
Department of English  
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
August 2009**

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The Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

April 17, 20<sup>09</sup>

The Thesis prepared by  
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till \_\_\_\_\_

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ABSTRACT

**till**

by

Jonathan Peter Moore

Dr. Donald Revell, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of English  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

*till* is a collection of poetry exclusively composed while the poet was a graduate student in the Creative Writing International Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The manuscript includes ekphrastic reflections on *William Eggleston's Guide* and confronts regionalism, religion and past/present subjectivity.

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## PREFACE

Socrates: You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of paintings stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever.

--Plato

These poems initially arose out of a passage in John Szarkowski's introductory essay for William Eggleston's first collection of photographs, out of the concentration that broke, as I read his prose. Szarkowski begins his opening remarks with the phrase, "AT THIS WRITING," and in the heralding expression, the former curator of New York's Museum of Modern Art forgoes hierarchies and vain attempts at immutable precision, privileging a subjective, immediate and particular mode of ekphrastic engagement (5). I was at the time trying to reflect on one of the well-known lines from William Carlos Williams' poem "To Elsie" in which he describes America's "devil-may-care men" and "young slatterns" as possessing "imagination which have no / peasant traditions to give them / character" (217). I began to read Williams' condemnation of industrialized provincial life into my own connections with the American South, and his influence spurred me to investigate the parts behind the parts of "I was raised in these parts." I saw this investigation taken up and taken further by Ross



McElwee in his film *Sherman's March*, Thomas Sutpen in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom* and most serviceably in *William Eggleston's Guide*. One night in the basement of my parents' home, I discovered my response to "To Elsie." Covered in dust and wrapped in a sheath of plastic, the cornice of a dollhouse jutted out from the rubble of a workbench.

For as long as I knew T, he smelled of dirt, an odor you notice all the more in the city, where he resided for the second half of his life. Bartering a shotgun home in sharecropping country for an air-conditioned duplex in Nashville's Berry Hill housing projects, he squirreled away nickels and dimes to buy small patches of land. In these little roadside thickets, he raised tomatoes, greens, squash, okra, carrots, chickens, strawberries and blackberries, all while working full-time at a local grocery distributor. Later in his life when his lungs started to shut down, he wore breathing tubes up his nose for hours at a time. The condition worsened until he was finally forced into the hospital for a tracheotomy. Following the operation, tubes tethered him at all times to his oxygen tank. No longer able to wood work in his shed or tend to his scattered plots of land, T divvied out the tilling of his gardens and the harvesting of his crops amongst neighbors, my father – who still answers to the appellation T's son – and me.

In the last spring of his life, T refused further imposition and remained indoors. The hospital dispatched door-to-door orderlies to change his trach. and, after a few visits, T asked one of them if he could keep the biohazard bags they filled with the slender tubes and stubby trachs that previously perforated his

larynx. My grandmother would sterilize the respiratory byproducts in the pots that were used for cooking. In no time, kids could be seen throughout the projects playing on swings that dangled from tree branches by T's recycled breathing tubes. As for the trachs, T spent his last days on earth using them as one might popsicle sticks, reassembling a scale version of the childhood home he left behind in sharecropping country. My grandfather, John T Moore, posthumously entered this replica of what he called "The Old Place" into an arts and crafts competition at the Tennessee State Fair, earning the blue ribbon.

Finding this artifact that had drifted into the unconscious clutter of my parents' basement seemed to be the perfect conversation starter for my dialogue with Williams. But no matter how I tried, I could not break the ice. The burden of rendering justice to the account of a man who resurrects his ancestral home out of the very thing that while keeping him alive signals his own impending death, proved to be too much for me. I could never divorce his *story* from the vague and overpowering potential I saw for it. And moreover, the generic disparity between personal narrative and lyric poetry – where one re-presents *my* truth the other monumentalizes its immediacy – prevents a relaxed cross-pollination of the two. In looking back, it strikes me as poignant that these insecurities and technical inadequacies manifested in response to Williams, a poet who spent much of his later career revising *Book One* of his long poem *Paterson*, burdened by his overwrought desire "to write in a larger way than of the birds and flowers, to write about the people close about me: to know in detail, minutely what I was talking about—to the whites of their eyes, to their very smells" (6).

A poem often quoted for the line “poetry makes nothing happen,” W.H. Auden ends “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” gesturing to the genre’s apostrophic ability to “survive, a way of happening, a mouth” (52). Such a mouth shoots the breeze with both Szarkowski’s intuitively brilliant embark and the work of William Eggleston it introduces. Conventionally unfamiliar in their framing and off-kilter composition, the images in *William Eggleston’s Guide* incited critics, teethered on the gelatin of Stieglitz and Nadar, to pan the Memphis photographer’s vernacular work as mere snapshots. “A snapshot... Heightened from life, / yet paralyzed by fact” writes Robert Lowell. In rebuttal, Eggleston argues:

I am afraid there are more people than I can imagine who  
can go no further than appreciating a picture that is a  
rectangle with an object in the middle of it, which they can  
identify... they want something obvious. Blindness is  
apparent when someone lets slip the word ‘snapshot.’  
Ignorance can always be covered by ‘snapshot.’ The word  
never had any meaning... I am at war with the obvious.  
(*Democratic Forrest*, 163)

Here, Eggleston addresses a replica of “the executives” from Auden’s “In Memory of W.B. Yeats,” who, having wandered “into the valley of [the poem/photograph’s] making” advocate its expulsion from the Republic (52). Obviousness suggests pre-judgment, and in that regard, I cannot help but consider the significance of titling a book *William Eggleston’s Guide*. Surely we

are meant to revere the images as the American South according to Mr. Eggleston. However, the longer I look at it the more I understand the designation as Eggleston's admission of unfamiliarity with the familiar. These dye transfers guide his transfer from what home *was* to what it *is* and back across. We are given both the obvious and the obscured. The "with" in "I am at war with the obvious" suddenly embraces a sense of allied forces. Eggleston is an Odysseus; *William Eggleston's Guide* signals his cartographic quest, a map of digressions. In *Democratic Forest*, he compares taking pictures with the viewfinder removed to firing a shotgun: "Unlike a rifle, where you carefully aim, following a dot or a scope, with a shotgun it's done with feel. With a fluid movement, your body follows a moving target and the gun keeps moving after the shot with what is know as follow through...the opposite of the rational method" (64). If Eggleston is guiding me these images are guiding him. I follow his follow-through, and in each image I hear Virgil exclaiming, "you have reached / the place past which my powers cannot see" (Purg., XXVII, 127). In each landscape, I hear an ancestral humming, you have reached the "raw towns that we believe and die in" (52).

:

Henri Cartier Bresson's photographs astound with their miraculous attention to the ephemeral, whereas Eggleston's uneventful structures mark the sparse instances of human absence. In questioning these unpopulated images of misspelt graffiti, yard-sprawled toys, dilapidated cribs, scattered puzzle pieces and tattered shoes, I found an enduring presence that bridged the generic gap separating personal narrative and lyric poetry. In attending to this enduring

presence, a way of writing jutted out from the rubble of the workbench. I was able to survive The Old Place as a way of happening, a mouth, a personal narrative that is overheard. If I am to name this enduring presence, it could only be *home*. This presence extends beyond the ekphrastic poems I have written in response to *William Eggleston's Guide* and encompasses, as well, my earlier work. The occasion for those poems seems closely attuned to what Robert Hass writes in his introduction to Robinson Jeffers' *Rock and Hawk*, "It is the fate of American poets to reinvent the religions of their childhoods in their poetry." While writing these poems, I was not necessarily reinventing the spirituality of my father, a part-time lay minister, but the quotidian habits of his church. By conflating my father's two worlds – the poly bag plant, where he works, and the sanctuary, where he worships – I noticed the pragmatism shared by both institutions. In this respect, the practice of speaking in tongues began to rhyme with the bag machine malfunctioning, as both threaten with collapse the nomos of their respective association.

In the account given of Williams, and likewise the nativist polemics of the Fugitives, I resented seeing History subordinated by Nature. Contemporarily the "South" is less a geographic region than an antiphon of tourism, Dollywood; commercialism, McDonald's Southern Style Chicken Sandwich; and nostalgic cocktails of individualism and myth, Dave Smith. Where I hope these poems depart from other engagements with the south, that confuse the constructed and the inherent at every turn, is in my adherence to Wendell Berry's proposal for regionalism, "a local life aware of itself" (56).

Many thanks to Claudia Keelan, Don Revell and Nick LoLordo, whose mentorship energized these exchanges.

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till



*...And I made a rural pen.*  
-William Blake

*For me color is an artifice, a cosmetic like the kind used to paint corpses.*  
- Roland Barthes

William Eggleston's Guide  
*Morton, Mississippi*

Book open to bone-

looking tree. River turning  
out its deep pockets

On the nightstand  
irises make themselves  
at home in a clear tincture

Where echoes sleep together  
with apparatus a mnemonic  
man is emptied of lungs. A child

is getting his tail tanned with tubes  
The smell of rain is letting up  
and I cannot sleep or look

at the elderly attached to oxygen  
tubes in casinos without my back  
pockets coming together, without

hearing this man refer to a bed  
of irises as flags, or the way the verse  
in his hands carries me to cords:

I bought some flags in Reno  
where your body is still the color of pine  
and on every broken down tree

we see rabbits and snakes  
tame on account of being  
hungry so long

W.E. Guide  
*Whitehaven, Mississippi*

What this long motel can't feel with its stains  
she discovers in her naked body

smearing makeup onto rented linens.  
Dusk is a stadium of native tongues  
telepathically speaking, "don't be so hard

on yourself for the parks keeping their hours  
and nativity scenes seeming out of place

in early March." Everything I touches turns  
to skin. Somnolent winds. Shoelace - tied  
to the vent's grate. Talk about memory, talk  
about pleasure - if it is flaccid, the air ain't working

Turning back to *God*, spray-painted on the wall  
the G coils into a 6; he faces W.E. flaccid

The night the ceiling scratched her scalp, pleasure  
could be heard in the walls, where it was written  
paper thin; making scenes out of seems

memory takes pictures of Polaroids as they turn  
the purple of dreams galloping over reams of milk spilt

If you tie a string around your finger  
it turns this color. The shutter stutters out  
a reassembled dusk. Take shelter. Take a picture  
of your last government check

## Consider the Ravens

### I. *Clear Thoughts*

The bridge burns, throwing day into night  
When I set out, I knew what it was to arrive:  
acupuncture makes its way to Music City

Tomorrow belongs to the bag machine  
malfunctioning. The past is a polyurethane  
ocean. At the plant, the pressman tells me  
if you drown in your work, they'll have to cut  
the most beautiful thing out of your lungs

Whelm without medical attention  
cuts strychnine with the weight of speech  
Selame kalaqui Selame Selame kattalaqui jon flog reido

Somewhere an angel is being skinned alive  
in rumor mills, and weather makes  
fun of machines, curling irons  
toasters. A beautiful girl in half-  
way house stitches curtains out of baby clothes  
believing if she were to step back and pull  
one foot out of this world and one foot  
out of the other, she would stop burning  
stop breathing, stop reading so much  
into roots left dangling in the air

After the rain, the lord hath said  
there is rain in the way you talk  
Go out and rent the porn of tractors

And the lord hath said when a man  
in the poly bag plant says be careful  
the job you are about to do  
should not be done

*II. Carry into the machine the voice of being caught*

The pressman speaks:  
That there's the seal bar  
We call her the hot-knife  
Running upwards of seven  
hundred degrees. She's  
a jewel. Gots to hear her out

No voice at all, only song  
of biting down as if in pain  
and releasing bag after bag  
The clear breath is cut and  
sealed. Cauterizing I've heard  
it called

Rendered one from another  
Stretch out your arms;  
the blade is longer with a heat  
could pull you from yourself

Bite down on clear breath

This is the lift of one hundred  
articulate tongues, boxed to be  
shipped, fulfilling the word of  
ends meeting their maker. Clear  
breath of this plant presses  
against cardboard palette

Taste the voice of being caught  
I can assure you it aint no scream  
I can assure you it aint no scream  
That blade'll cut you clear in half  
The voice of being caught:  
I see you in there

III. *Here I Raise my Ebenezer*

*Sleep just jumped up on me.*  
Inside the bag plant  
the hot knife cuts the poly  
seals the halves, wakes his  
children with what sounds  
like coughing

a clearing of throat

*If I ever get so I can't work. I'll want you  
to come over and shoot me in my sleep  
but do it the day before I call you  
so as I don't see it coming*

To recline is to stretch out  
Recline. Stretch out: I is evidence  
in the absence of seal  
the bag takes on sleep's physical shape  
a rending of ends  
a recliner characterized by a father's  
father's absent head  
greasy blemish, congenital  
blot, there to see  
there to see through

*IV Priest Dam Project Changed Lives of Many*  
-The Tennessean, 3/10/04

Hope like everything else  
you have swallowed  
this isn't permanent

onemississippi  
twomississippi  
thousands of  
motorists traveling  
I 40 just east  
of the city glance  
at the impressively close  
J. Percy Priest Dam

fivemississippi  
six children steal batteries  
from fire alarms,  
touching them  
to their tongues

onethousand one  
hundred and ten  
tennessee families  
gradually  
relocated, when  
the state flooded  
the valley. Dwellings  
and barns sold

To kiss the terminal  
is to need the word  
to take the taste  
of tongue from  
your mouth

ninety-five tennessee  
graves were moved  
Little families  
Seventeen cemeteries  
carried no names

halfway through  
the prayer

I notice we were asked  
to bow our eyes  
and close our heads

If the family insists  
the state leaves  
the body  
where it is



## Whatever Tickles your Fiscal

The hallway nests the daylights  
out of me. When the blind pose  
for photographs they know  
how one feels. Sock footed  
preacher reasons how cotton  
can be eaten, plucked pink  
after the first sentence wizens  
into print: plates spinning

under a tent in one artery  
of the delta. In my dreams  
forgetting to lock your doors  
restocks the view  
your windows rest against

In epilepsy and Wal-Mart  
we see ourselves as one  
digital one with one digital  
one to grow on, muttering  
this is where language stops  
and starts blinking. Slow down  
America, doctor-it-up

W.E. Guide  
*Tallahatchie County*

W.E. snaps a child faceless from her playhouse  
doorway. Morning, just clearing  
the fencerow, restores it in the American  
Whistler, surrounded by dead grass

producing the entrails of peasant  
homes where like our lungs, light  
only sheds light when death needs  
an eye on the shucking hand

Tearing sieves from the breathing tubes  
Whelm flicks them into water  
From this smallest of bodies billows  
the unprocessed rank of field hospitals

Is nothing more baptismal than the camera shy  
for good cause? Before there was anything  
but children and wind chimes  
I will have heard the cleansing roil of T

erecting a home-place from memory  
breathing tubes and children's books  
Each trach is inspiring. I-think-I-can-  
I-think-can Lincoln Logs cooked clean

as a whistle, bloodless as saw-dust  
Children's books in this house meant books  
children had gotten in to with pen, circling  
till they tire or tear through

Leave me

to the typing paper stored in air-tight bins  
where humidity lets it alone

In the feral colony, we're told  
feral means fearful. On the road

back to Music City, heat lightning  
Doors boiling over into splinters

and someone is caught living out the sound of silos  
Where no one owes no favors, tradition's

a table waiting to be set. Enter it as you would an angel  
built outside with fish hooks. Where handwriting

is a whore-hating ghost, you sign your name  
son of man

Trailer for

Spider web on the hedges  
I wanted to see you naked  
on his cold leather couch  
Four o'clocks open late  
and release their fragrance  
throughout our conclusions  
about concrete nails.

If there is no make believe  
in heaven, there is in the afternoon  
Words cleaned out of me, it's true:  
I mailed a blank missive to you

Spider web on the hedges  
What you see here and what  
makes you suffer belongs to Amateur  
Photography, prayer that folds  
so tight we mishear "overcast days"  
for "open caskets" and "can you touch  
your toes?" for "can you color your hair  
until it makes me hard?" I have  
budgeted \$40 a year for movies, and  
even if I blow \$60, the plan holds as true  
as I am sweet on you

W.E. Guide,  
*Near Morton, Mississippi*

Of course he is in fact  
it's in the air conditioning  
that I laid eyes upon God

The way the outskirts appear  
in a bottle of ipecac, and the land  
doesn't remember an old friend

from a former one. Count no Count  
knew his days were numbered  
when his wife asked to paint them

thinking this likeness will be the one  
that rivets our senses to the rain  
our birthmarks to the workbench

Once the past that was not  
perished, she installed window  
units and prayed of walls perspiring

measure of myth in the lay  
of abandoned plots, measure of days  
in the middle of one or the other Whelm

remembered her introduction to  
good eyes and roads. Back when the land's  
place was in the unspoken request

and the photograph is as we speak

## A Dime that Doesn't

Above the bears breaking muscle loose  
from a stream, colder than the dead  
sustaining them; planes cross

the country's t. A woman rides  
in the letter next to me, another in the letter  
I am drafting on an air sick bag

With every false start, the voice  
on the other end becomes larger  
The sky is a landfill for such things:

sins we no longer name. Each word  
sets the animal's teeth  
in plaster. In panting  
we till its ingrown tongue

## The Cuss of Place

T's son leaves his mark  
on the mocking bird's hide  
in a place visible  
to the bird by mirror

When it pecks at the spot  
I shout for my mother  
and she slams her hand  
in a car door, holding it

I had never heard

*Long Live the Kane*

A garden came, and we burnt it  
for in its piles of silence  
occasionally, our lives came up

missing / for air. Belief  
outgrows its aliases. Sugar  
scratches  
at the bottom of our skulls

an aging rapper  
slapping—  
together flows



## Cot Damn

Watch out or I'll have you  
steering with your knees  
clap-happy with the radio  
screaming out we got the beat

we got the beat, we got  
the beat. Yea, we didn't rent  
Don't Look Back. We water  
colored in a park, all white

and black. For contrast  
busted blocks rendered unto us  
cheese balls, the old kind  
that come in a can and blush

allover the sheets the help  
slept in. One crass hurrah  
would have been grand  
Bobby Pin, then again

Till Human Voices Wake Us

Says Sonny replaced the lights  
in the education building at church  
with new florescent bulbs

Says they look so much better  
you can actually see  
to walk down the hall

Says Ms. Geneva found herself  
washing fingerprints off the walls  
where she couldn't see them before

## Labor Ready

They sit you down with your dead  
ends. in tongues of one to five:  
How likely are you  
to be dismissed from a job for fighting?

How good are you at fighting?

One being. I have no idea, Five being  
I cannot lose  
The color of angels  
they claim my piss is unclean

W.E. Guide  
*Crenshaw, Mississippi*

There's no way I'm sure of  
your being  
okay if n' when the plant closes

The n between if 'n when  
is to say  
each 'n to his own

The T between John and Moore  
is not initial  
Sharecropper can't be expected

to name all his children  
twice. T's son  
drives I around in a pick up

stomping grounds, fair grounds  
Berry Hill  
the parts behind the parts of I

was raised in these parts  
Think of the T  
on the headstone and what

Dr. Anderson said at the funeral  
I see death everywhere  
Other peoples' fears frighten me

Pyrrhic  
*after Ross McElwee*

Behind the wheel  
with the top down  
your head  
centers  
a hurtling landscape

Persons seen  
abandoning  
animals at this site  
will be prosecuted

How many first  
sexual experiences  
can one  
woman have

## Sew & Sew

I mark my place  
in Bibles from  
one inn to another  
way out – with a Hello  
My Name Is  
*humming so strongly of it*

Performance

“Once History inhabits a crazy house, egoism may be the last tool left to History”

Norman Mailer

I, on the other hand, am in service to the horseshoe hanging over the shed door

I sip runoff pot licker poured over a photo album

I wipe my mouth on a newspaper that reports: If Tennessee was to excise Shelby County, the state’s public school system would rise to the low 20s in national rankings

I knock off twenty minutes early and call it cool-down time

I ask spring if it is coherent and notice

I am all talk

I rears its own form on a chalkboard with industrial staccato  
A SHORT MAN IS AN OXYMORON BUT STILL A MAN

I attribute the quote to a headless statue

I see every day on my way to where I stay

I make the house smell of dolls

I listen to soft paper when

I need to hear a man wrapped in flames

I expect a miracle every time he gets to the part about Percy Priest Lake

I remove the inhalator and his face comes off with it

I swap eyes with the yard jockey and he tells me,

“I can’t sleep knowing I must go back out there”

I keep smashing clear through cock-crow

I assumed genitals were present. Later,

I discovered genitals were impossible

I cannot be certain of where anything originates unless

I sit in a room with someone till they no longer exist

I go to the library when I am homeless

I go to the bathroom when I am good and ready

I knew she was faking. We'd talked about it

I am no hunter, so I'm told

I, as it happens, is the hardest part of hearing your own voice

I feed lines to a wall-eyed lesbian who can't keep "It's The End of the World  
as We Know It" together

I write about seeing fall, "When the shotguns burn woodstoves

I feel the hoses turned loose inside of me, blowing the trash out"

I wash my mouth out with a map



## Covenant and Loving It

In the heart of the stomach-  
colored country side, ice falls  
from an awning and bread breaks  
a bitch's leg

On both sides of a bomb  
threat, sandbags roar in remembrance  
of the ocean's floor. Suffer  
the dream where you stand

to be done in by dreams  
Into a pattern  
in the key of hot knives  
a sea of glass stained, levees shatter

Let 'er Rip

She pulls another name  
this time from the dead

The weight of covered dishes  
is the weight of dropping them

onto the fellowship hall's  
simonized floors. Light

shines through accidents  
imaginary as all get out

My cousins book  
to the sprinkler's edge

where headstones swear  
the unreferenced shadow

of its clock-wise spew  
When they ask, I tell them

I have forgotten how  
a staring contest works

## Bystander

When a hole in the map bursts  
into flame

piss on my grave  
a slow legato

of pollen describes the mind  
when the prescribed dies

home becomes the medicine  
they ask us to pour

down the drain

Chanticleer  
*for Jonathan Williams*

Hey, Ladonna, who do  
you think would win  
in a fight between  
Scooby Doo and Aunt  
Jemima?

I don't think  
she'd fight a dog

## Lasting Impression

The hotel baked cookies all day  
Heaven is singing where you have no business

Lowman on the totem pole swapped a hot sheet  
for cold, took off when Alejandro's

fingerprints went up in fumes. Sing for the hatchlings  
wrapped in a wash cloth soaked in bleach

Sing for the flying low, for the tumbled rack of tourist  
pamphlets. See Rock City and the clouds

break over the deep end, where the sound  
of a player piano powwows with your own heart beat

In the Boot Corral a bride-to-be  
towels off in the nude, while

Tootsie's Wild Orchids Lounge  
in the unfastened stay

W.E. Guide  
*Memphis*

The broken watch worn  
in habit. Split olives  
in the fig tree's shade.  
We press out sunburns and  
the pale impressions flash  
A fountain, yielding salt and fresh  
gurgles through handfuls of olives  
A dress up her crack, as T's son tells it

The man in the pew behind her explains  
his two black eyes: I pulled the bunch out  
and she turned to waylay me  
Well, how did you get the second  
I figured she wanted it there  
so I shoved it back. The bit in the horse's  
mouth. The area outside of Jerusalem  
where trash was carried and burned

Poem

*preacher to preacher's wife:*  
I'm sorry I need

understanding that's what

*soloist to the sound man:*  
When we  
attached a tape recorder

to my failings, we recorded  
over your successes

*usher to the others:*  
The ceiling is healing

into an open wound

*born-again to the unborn:*  
Where the tape is

I can hear what the hell is

## Steeple People

1.  
Here's the church  
    Here's the people  
    Open up your  
    a) hearts  
    b) purses  
    c) wallets  
    d) all of the above  
  
    we need a new steeple

2.  
Here's the organist  
    Here she's calling  
Street-people in the  
fellowship hall  
    A Room in the Inn  
  
Becoming, meeting one's end  
    or maker

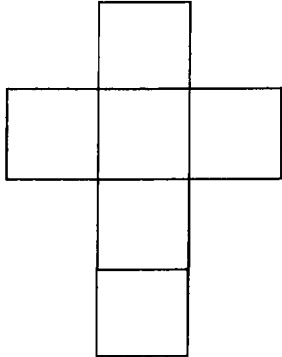
3.  
With each donation, a name  
will be etched onto one of  
six glass panes

4.  
Hug n' Howdy Time  
Revival, Prayer Request  
Offertory Hymn  
Responsive Reading  
Profession of  
    Faith  
Might near everything can  
be called

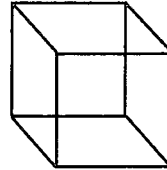


5.

What will we call



when it



and is buried in the spire

6.

Here are the children

Here they're singing

Do lord o do lord o

Do you remember me

Nothing is called  
to my knowledge

a room in one's end  
or maker

As Rich as Croesus

Call the cracks creases  
In Roman Holiday, workers  
putty the cathedral steps  
Eliza Doolittle splays across

In America, an eight-teen year old  
creases a map of Ethiopia, coerced  
by her father to holiday  
in Italy, where she searched steps for

putty, but instead finds cracks  
*I wanted Atticus Finch's suit  
to stride through that square  
to sweat through my creases*

Eliza to Higgins: an inhuman  
noise of cell phones sending lip  
puckered pics. I crack and reply  
screen captured Doolittle Peck g'nite

Snapper Jessiessippi

For good news spreading  
commerce leaves need

The further he went out  
of his mind, gathering  
influence, the deeper  
upon returning home

he tills the jukebox  
With enough pressure  
to make mirrors  
into believers, he sings:  
The south is the oldest place  
on earth. It has been in  
the Wal-Mart the longest

Aux Animaux Domestiques  
*after Michel Foucault*

to be –  
gin with

the thought that bears the stamp of  
an age: the wild profusion of existing  
things. An embalmed  
et cetera. Having just  
broken the water pitcher, my  
saliva speaks,

*What has been removed  
in short, is the famous  
operating table*

*Utopias afford no real locality  
and so the slick mind*

stirs under our feet

Propinquity

*after Renee Gladman*

While the world slept, they robbed us blind

Each to each, a community  
renames itself disaster relief:  
“even our thieves lost everything”

Looking out for the uninterrupted  
drone of clothes that somehow  
talk all at once in a salt shaker of  
sound, people movers, so fast  
we catch ourselves

wanting cologne to pour from  
a radio. Call it Sex Machine

Call it snake hole, where  
when I was a child, I ran a garden hose  
remembering a boy done in by syringe  
filled with air

The mob mentality only works if one of us is spared  
Ezra P. to Michael V.

W.E. Guide  
*Tallahatchie County*

One could confuse  
the hyacinth ablaze  
of its own accord  
and the child's head engulfed  
as the center. Trees  
at their varicose best  
pumping nothing into the air  
save the slightest scent of  
his leaving, unyielding  
honesty and eyeglasses  
tubes up the nose  
the breathing machine  
does not make air  
its icy embouchure  
sticks to my vision  
proof they touched  
and tore  
us lidless

W.E. Guide  
*Tallahatchie County*

A cropped cloud  
and a sense of what is there to see here  
once I stops looking, a sign that says nothing  
reads King Cotton Beverage Co Inc  
and another Open and another too  
small to make out. Water tower  
and the idea of today stands taller  
the closer you get to it. Before it gets too high  
tie a string to the stem  
long enough to soak up the bridle-deep blood  
of military personnel: a hell I once saw  
described in a unisex bathroom

Someone etching a bible verse  
which someone comes upon later  
and adds only in the south  
would you find a bible verse  
on the stall and I cannot help  
but add another level of removal, etching  
only in the south a person references the south  
as an etc, etc, string that makes the mind bearable

Crutchfield saw this spot on his dead friend's chest  
where the treatment still eats, unlike a cigarette  
butt, the color of one still crying, searching  
for its bearings with the light that shimmers up.  
Spare change at the bottom of a brim fed pond.  
Fill a flowerpot with water  
and somebody's sure  
to empty their pockets into it

Skin/Within  
after Charles Olson

The *virtually* put out  
our eyes  
    in the umbrage  
        oranges  
            and still more  
                oranges in the  
                    tree's cast shadow

I wants to leave us  
                                speechless with a speech

In one of the laundry room's  
    otherwise empty washers  
I found a stranger's knock-off name  
    brand hoodie that looked so good  
it reminded me of the real one  
    I had as a child

When they moved my neighbors  
    forgot to unplug & pack up  
their alarm clock  
    It buzzes an empty apartment orange

How to pull the  
    soaking wet button-up  
from the washer using  
    only the soaking wet  
        button-up

to leave us speechless

but that only resulted in an  
    empty apartment  
act equivalent to affect

I writes on a mirror  
in dry-erase. It is better  
to ask for forgiveness than permission when  
applying lipstick to nap  
    with another woman

Not that I is a woman though



if I were you might not have  
left

children outside  
after dark  
means in the dark  
*I say awkward **awkward***  
you say it  
**AWEkWORD**  
**AGAIN** *I got you **AGAIN***  
*a thousand years of death*

to be put into  
the hands of mystery  
move not a muscle  
in the effort of  
relocating heaven and earth

Keys thrown upon finding out  
I was afraid I shattered  
a mirror or scuffed the  
floor in professor's house you  
were sitting

to pick up the pieces  
pick apart from either/or  
image/sound  
heaven/earth

in either/and  
an orange  
*is the being peeled off*

the lint trap  
slipped I's mind  
so succinctly

so I pulls  
wet clothes from the dryer

## Heathen

Cold, the sparrow curses in treble clef.  
The florist has one arm and can't  
remember how the lime kiln hands down  
lime. The dark dries brighter than the hill  
-top temple, Gnostic movie theater  
where everything gets old if you do it  
often enough. On sanctuary steps, a boy  
throws himself down a forged hymn.  
This is where locals splurge their bones  
into the lake and tradition eats them.  
This is where I wash my face

Percy Priest

Early so that when dreams are divvied out  
you get the one where you recognize  
your mother. A man stands near  
the first remove, going on about head injuries  
and light coming from the operator's shed.  
It hurts listening to him  
the pain of grapes swallowed whole,  
the memory of our flat chests sepia-toned

in sopping baptismal robes. Come June  
I will return to the peace sign we carved  
into that mulberry branch. By then,  
it will have healed into a snake. He asks  
if I think they use current from  
the dam or if the operator has his own  
generator inside. This is  
the government we're talking about

## Young Avenue Napkin

In the bassinet of shiver, I pull  
money out of a machine, supple  
as wrapping paper smoldering  
in a barrel, where hair singes  
the way lightning starts  
on earth, retreats to sky, the way  
the balance on my account  
escapes into the registers  
of all the omens I polish off

## Arise, Shine

Armature in the peripheries,  
a house pointing east with windows  
so hot humans wake on beds  
stripped bare. None of them  
went to college, one was held hostage  
as a child by her father. T, according  
to T's son, spoke of drunks breaking  
and entering, turning the old place  
into a club house. In the repose  
of running a still, playing cards catch  
fire, and a muralist's daughter retraces  
her steps from factory farm to family  
tree. Where did I leave my keys?

Armature in the peripheries,  
his idea of Eden was spider eggs  
strung from ceiling to ceiling fan.  
Some organs of sight are not, he'd insist,  
needle but thread, so we kneel  
where the land revives your name.  
Strewer of synapses. Flipper of switches.  
The silt around your eyes sparkles  
when she listens. Who is to blame  
if I wait to wash the feet of the dead  
till they are dead and have no need  
for feet? Sand gets into everything  
the televised speech, the roaring drunk.

## Crazy Eights

We are accustomed to hearing small children,  
but the one he ran over in his car was quite large  
Divorced his wife – started over with a comb

and a son. So I hear the women  
squeal away the mirror's fog  
licking the chaffs of their palms

I'd wager half of all baptisms  
are do-overs. Men watching  
brico blocks in broad daylight

Quiet, his mouth and flagship tattoo  
point to shock therapy  
and the small engines it leaves in disrepair

W.E. Guide  
*Huntsville, Alabama*

Still a photographer behind this war  
with the obvious, still the sun streams  
another way behind us both. The closest  
elms burgeon sweaty and bright

Amending what we cannot say  
with what they let us see; tree non-tree  
yesterday, the Air National Guard uprooted

Their search lights and chain link, and now  
there is a shadow called rustling, and now  
there is a swarm of catfish days spent reading:  
treatise on the breeding pains that snap

the bough. Oceanic chamber pot hissing  
with song I has never heard, moves  
I because it touches memory purposefully

A man in company clothes  
wiping dust from the nape  
of a retired jet fighter

Oil spots make him think of weather  
Glory,  
I will wait for you by the vending machines

## Skill & Live

After the new wore off, their children began  
adding and taking words away, learning  
how it was cults were made, how the same fingers  
ape rock, paper, scissors, can pluck the flame  
right off the wick, believing if it's ripe enough  
if you're just that slick, you can eat the bud

In an exit-ramp-abandoned Ford, they breathe  
smoke. Memory of sleep escapes as they empty  
their pockets, trying to remember  
the book before they monkeyed with it  
Visitors linger in the hospital's  
parking garage till the storm passes by  
Heaven, one says, has us pegged



W.E. Guide

*Black Bayou Plantation, near Glendora, Mississippi*

Gypsy pigeons gone to pieces  
in the revolving doors  
are not pictured

The white floors at my back breathe  
swaddling T through  
their strapping arms

White jugs on a gravel drive  
a hitch in my giddy-up, rackabone  
in my throat

The last thing he ate, snack cakes  
and spare ribs from the hospital  
vending machine, clings

to love's loud unprotected limn  
Stinking of tomorrow's rain  
the clouds foam at the mouth

W.E. Guide  
*Tallahatchie County*

In heat, those who cling  
to guns and religion return  
to decorate the graves  
For Christ's sake, Charles  
in his paid-cash Cadillac  
pulls quarters from ears  
and keeps them

Traw is a purple heart,  
holds forth by creak bed  
His shadow felled  
clear cross barbwire  
What's burnt into the retina  
believe you me  
will always be there  
in the middle of the air

W.E. Guide  
*Gulfport, Mississippi*

A woman knows  
when her hairnet  
has fallen into  
the grinder. Fingers  
wring through her  
permanent. She  
knows someone  
will have to pay  
for the thousand  
pounds of pig  
that will rot  
in the jungle  
of dumpsters

A boy sneaking up  
on a sleeping dog  
stamps as hard as he can  
on the rock where  
the stray sprawls

The sky has seen it all  
once, and we  
are there  
when the farmer  
rifles her open  
and the boys come  
running up a hill  
to hear how he had  
to do it, how he had  
no idea what could  
have scared  
that dog that crazy

I don't know what  
to tell you, Virginia  
cept keep looking

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