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misericordia

Brian Morris

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, morrisb6@unlv.nevada.edu

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MISERICORDIA

by

Brian Morris

Bachelor of Fine Arts – Creative Writing
Penn State Erie, the Behrend College
2008

Master of Education
Edinboro University
2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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Brian Morris

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Department of Art

Donald Revell, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Chair

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.
Graduate College Interim Dean

Maile Chapman, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Richard Harp, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Elsbeth Whitney, Ph.D.
Graduate College Faculty Representative

Abstract

For this thesis, I am writing a collection of poetry that will be one hundred and nineteen pages. The title of this collection is *miser cordia* and it tells the story of a man forced to wander the earth to escape increasingly apocalyptic weather that plagues any location he finds himself for longer than a day – from raindrops to thunderstorms to earthquakes and beyond. The poems document his daily struggles as well as his increasingly troubled faith.

The themes of loneliness, endlessness, and work dominate the thesis as the man continues to struggle to find some comfort in a painful, exhausting world. Throughout the thesis, the Psalms of Exile are rewritten and adapted to his situation, documenting his faith from devout believer, to weary searcher, to renewed faith, to miserable cynic.

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misericordia

And plague followed at his heels
the way tides follow the arc of the moon.

But there are no tides here.
Only sand and solitude.
And the economics of wasted time.

True, there are no clocks.
And true, time is always time,
but, an hour is not merely an hour.
Just ask our exile.

Leaving fresh tracks
in the mud of a Bible story.
This can only make me better.

The sun is cast over
the emptiness ahead of me,
framing the weeping willows
in profile.

Draped in morning glories,
the meadow's work is blooming.

Prometheus, only
forced to march
beneath the shadowed wings
as of carrion.
These stormclouds watch me.

I can feel the season's changing in my bones.
Winter's full weight
balancing precariously upon my scapula.
The melting frost of spring
held tight to my pelvis by gravity.

Every step I take,
I carry a calendar within me.

Are the birds exiled?
Doomed to patient wandering?

I would prefer to think not.

What else can we call it?
Skimming the fingertips of clouds,
delighting in the presence of sought-for land,
if only to rest.

I have been told that sharks never sleep
because they too must always keep moving.

In some deserts
it's as if God,
in our sleep,
turns the world back
in its persistent rotations
like a dial.
I wake
and know
that I've done this all before.
Seen this red rock somewhere.

I thought once
cartography is just the science
of wandering.
But my maps are crude
and sad metaphors
for the sloping hills
and plummeting valleys
I have passed through.
Rivers become empty
even as I pen them to page.
All the landmarks are entirely unimpressive.

A dance hall
strapped in tight with
everyone
and me.

The rain plays waltzes
across the tin roof
for the boys and girls.

Swallows patterned in the sky,
like breathing constellations.

Here, bourbon blurs lines.
Making reverberated light into haze.

Heroic couplets, too,
are patterned constellations.
But no longer breathing.

Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
like schoolchildren
lost from our mothers.
I'm tired of this walking,
this losing.
Lord, I am faithful
yet.
And without knowing
what you are delivering me from,
I trust the end of this is fast approaching.

Life is nothing but brick walls,
scattered haphazardly across the world,
standing like a testimony
to inert progression.

I apologize.
Walking makes me wax on philosophic.
So many roads ahead of me,
no point in waning yet.

The bourbon gets into my cracked and broken lips
and burns.

The clouds follows me
across the night
for time is really place.
And tonight I am here.

In the morning,
when I am there,
I will still be thinking about whether distance
is a function primarily
of time or place
and how either way,
my feet will ache.

Each morning begins
with the same melody
traipsing through my head.
Piano keys whispering good night to sleep.

I have even timed my daily routines
to the tune reverberating through my bones.
Open my eyes at the first chorus.
Crack my knuckles at the second verse.
Stand at the climax of the second bridge.
Feel sorry for myself before it's over.

Psalm 138

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;
my feet, however,
have a few select words for you.
Battered and beaten,
I yearn for your remembered touch.
I know I shall find you soon.
I know you shall alleviate the pains of searching.

The thunder resounds
hollow
and lacking effort.

And yet the birds still disappear
almost out of thin air.

I would think them gone,
if not for the frightened chirping
at the distance of my vision.

Fishing in the rain
is something I've grown all too accustomed
to doing these days.

And every time,
I imagine
Jesus
rising up out of the mist
that lays atop the lake
as a soft blanket.

Once,
between the cracks of lightning
separating the sky from itself,
I saw a fish jumping,
possibly out of joy
or fear.

The sun is shining through the windows
of my home
in my head.

This daydream keeps me walking.

And if the dream
includes a lover
hovering about the window
so that I can see her smiling
in that hushed way she always has
in my daydreams,
I can continue walking all night.
Never making any progress.

The skies are threatening rain
again.

I'll just keep walking.

And daydreaming about a time
I almost remember
when clouds didn't stalk my heels
and my mother pinched my cheeks,
my father taught me my letters.

He carries a pocket map to Paradise
in his jacket.
It's not much really.
A little joke he plays with himself.
It's just a small town in some midwestern state.
He likes to think he's a prophet.

To kill time,
he considers the dirt that cakes the creases and knuckles of his hands.
Breathes on it, pretending to be God.
Giving birth to a million little dusty vixens in the afternoon sun.

Raindrops forewarn disaster.
This I've learned.

And umbrellas never help.
Will only keep you dry.

But the rain is not the thing
to worry yourself about.

I followed the butterflies for as long as I could.
Over small mountain ranges
and a river I could barely swim.

I lost them
when I collapsed to sleep
through the failed afternoon.

I found them again
by accident.
Stumbled into their tiny sliver of forest.
Watched them rise from the weeds,
taking flight for the first time, perhaps,
in a rainbow of motion.

The pulse of cicadas ground beneath my feet
and echoing through my veins
keeps me up some nights.

Or it is the pregnant clouds that stalk me.

Either way, I rarely sleep a full night.
I am always tired.

The heat settles like a haze
over this desert,
obscuring the mountains in the distance
and erecting lush gardens
in the interim
made only of light
and a softened imagination
brought on by weltering thirst.

Even the birds have grown too lazy
to take wing,
and sulk about the earth
like us pathetic humans
who never learned to grow wings.

Refugee Town

The dirt gathers at our feet.
We use euphemisms
to wash it all away.
“Travelers.”
But you can tell by their hushed voices.
There is, at least, clean water.

On a Child's Violin, in the Refugee Camp

I strum
incoherently.
Trying to remember
a song I heard
played once
somewhere else
but I can't get the time quite right,
holding notes too long
and missing
others
altogether.

I can only remember the lyrics.
If I was a diving duck,

As the clouds gather above me,
once again,
I know my time here is running short.

The bartender lines up as many shots as he can
and I start downing them quickly as the raindrops begin falling.

For a brief moment,
I consider staying –

sitting still,

finishing my drinks, slowly,

and letting the world swallow me whole.

Or whatever else might happen.

But when I finish the last shot,
I pay my tab
and walk off
as usual
to spare the townsfolk
this destruction meant for me.

The everyday clouds are a warning
of too much time spent.
So I resume walking.
Pacing ever forward.
Gouging twin furrows across the land.
Perhaps in the next town,
I will buy some tulip seeds,
begin walking backwards,
and leave a trail of blossoms
to show where I've been.

Psalm 139

You have searched me, Lord,
to find out my heart.
What would you have me do?
What part shall I amputate
to make me worthy?
What wicked thoughts have you found
that should be excised?
I give them up, wholly,
just to come to your arms.

A minor thunderstorm
playing along outside
like a comedy of errors,
because of my sulking.

It is only when the ice runs out
and the bourbon is as hot
as the afternoon
that I begin to reconsider
my position here.

Shuffling on
through the accumulating rain.

Too Much Time Spent

He woke to the low roll of thunder on the horizon
warning him it was time to leave.

If the accusatory cackle of the nightingale
could suddenly take root
and feed off the soil
it would surely take shape
as *Salix babylonica*.

The hard ground didn't even bare a mark
from his temporary existence.

The lightning vibrates the air,
making it hum like that violin
I heard the old man playing
in that tiny little bar
at the center of that town.

My head is stumbling
with alcohol and the incessant rain.
I pray for an umbrella
and a warm bed.
The lightning cracks open the sky.

I'm waltzing across this wilderness
to someone else's time.
Bargaining my hours
for someone else's minutes.
And, in the end,
I'm left with nothing
yet again.

The sun reflects
and refracts
off every single drop
of sweat
that courses
down
my body.

Trudging.

The nights this time of year
do not get nearly as cold
as you would think
or hope.
Still, it's better
than oppressive daytime.

I can feel the blood soaking into my shoes.
Squishing between my toes
with every step.
There's no time to rest
because I can also feel the raindrops
beginning to fall.

Psalm 140

Rescue me, Lord, from evildoers;
the wicked ones who hound me,
exile me
again and again,
cloud my thoughts,
make me doubt your mercy.
(Or was it you who brought this to me?)
Lord, give me the strength
to exile *them*
and their wicked words
and to return to your fold.

Attempts to Normalize

Pretending to be a tourist
often
makes things worse.
The expectations inherent
in something like a vacation
only sharpen my regret.

The same thing applies
to search parties
and explorations
of new and vast continents.

My journal is starting to read like the Book of Job.
I keep penciling in disasters.
It doesn't make them lighter.
I'm not sure if I thought it would.

Walking through rubble coats my shoes in ash
and all I remember is a book
I read once about a man who ate worms.
Perhaps God's manna.

This city, though,
is nothing but ash
and I don't think anyone's noticed.

I will be fine.
But I would trade so many,
every,
“will be”
for just a single “was.”

God’s never been one
to barter in verb tenses.

That one word is meant
to make us optimistic.
I think we’ve all seen
what Job could teach us of “will.”

If I could only learn the trick
to close the gaps in time.
To take me from here and now
to then and wherever the hell I am then.
But this all just sludges forward.
Slow motion déjà vu.

Wishful Thinking

I dream sometimes of home.
A cabin, buried
deep in the woods,
between spired oak trees,
and hidden.

Or perhaps a simple room
in one of these caricature towns
I have passed through.

Or maybe that cabin,
at the center of the forest of butterflies.

Psalm 141

I call to you, Lord, come quickly to me;
your voice is so soft and shallow,
I can barely hear you any more.
Come quickly to me
and let me hold onto you.
I need to feel your remembered touch.
I need to weep into your hands.

A Remembrance

Between her moans,
I can hear the rumbling, superheated air.
I do everything in my power to ignore it.
I can't.

She looks at me when I stop.
“What is it?”

It doesn't matter that I knew this was coming.
Inevitability is not a comfort.

She hears it now. And looks worried.
The bed starts to shake and I think it is her shivering.
But then the walls start their groaning
and trembling.

Lightning explodes the willow tree in the yard
into sharp light and fire.
I feel her pull me closer.

I lay every item I own out on the tiny shelf
in this bitter motel room.

Toothbrush, one faded book of poetry,
torn and threadbare notebook,
half a pencil,
one solitary photograph of my mother.

Taking account of one's life this way
is bound to be depressing,
but I'm not sure what other account I might make.

God has drawn the curtains on the night sky,
not even a solitary star to count before falling asleep.
Sometimes the emptiness at night is exhausting.

Instead of cicadas, I fill the silences with my own humming.
A song I overheard once.
I somewhat remember how it goes.

“Let the floods swell.”
the man’s sign reads.
But that was over in another book.
There is no flooding here.
Only because I continue wandering.
You may thank me
for not turning this
into a reprise for another time.

The sky is burning
with each lightning pulse,
making the darkness a strobe light.
I have begun to fear
the sound of rain.

You grow to dread the sound of thunder
on warm, spring nights.

And the trembling earth it precedes.

It can be tempting to sleep
with balled up spider webs
in your ears.
Instead you always dream so lightly
that it can't even be said to be dreaming.

Always thunder
or its ghost.
I am losing sleep.
My head is the womb of the universe
being split open.
There is sun-drenched barrenness
in the middle of everything.

I dream endlessly of thunder.
And raindrops running slowly
down my lower back.
When I wake,
my fingers are pruned and damp.

Some nights, I take to not sleeping.
It is the only way I can get up in the morning
dry and refreshed.
If painfully tired.

I.

I met a stray cat
wandering in the desert like me.

She had just killed a tarantula,
presented it to me
as a gift.

I stroked her little head
and she pressed her bloody paws to my wrists.

II.

The cat followed me for days,
rubbing against my legs
and sharing my food.

She would even sleep curled up,
resting against my arm.

III.

An Unasked Question

I woke one morning
and she was gone.

The clouds look alarmed
in their vigilant marching.
Left, right, left.
Stratus, cumulus, stratus.
And it's the accumulation
that gets everyone's blood flowing.
It's easy to pretend
that these are metaphors
or similes
when you have the cover of distance.
In the midst of all this,
figurative language does not exist.

A Remembrance Revisited

I circled back,
at length,
to where the rain had washed
the soot from the remains.
By the time I got back,
there was no one left.
I found the spot where the old willow tree,
the one that started it all,
had stood.
Now, only a black smudge
on the face of the earth.
Lightning in the distance
made me shiver.

Psalm 142

I cry aloud to the Lord;
I can only hope
that you can hear my weeping
above the thunder
that envelopes me.

Some days it feels like my hands have grown together
in the attitude of prayer.
I have seen two trees once
wound around each other.
One plus one equals one.
Soon I will just be another statue,
to dot the face of cathedrals,
perpetually praying.

The meandering staccato of marching
keeps time in my head –
a structure to build my thoughts around.

Unfortunately, it is always the same thoughts.
Food, bourbon.
Cycles and repetitions.

I've been told that when God closes a door,
there is a full length mirror
dangling from its back.
Each day, now, is a reflection.

The sun burns a hole through the top of my head.
I can feel my thoughts catch fire.
The water seems to have evaporated from my canteen.
I'm so thirsty.

Is that what happened after the flood?
Did God just evaporate the tidal waves
leaving all the dead bodies rotting behind?

Pompeii

The air above the city is still acrid,
like battery acid.
You can taste it on the tip of your tongue.

It is remarkable
the way we find it remarkable
to see such frozen destruction.
An entire city
filled with imitations of Ado.
An open air museum
for what little life can be brought down to.

Psalm 143

Lord, hear my prayer,
now,
with the violent thunder
so far behind me.
I call your name
and beg for your succor.
I am yours,
do with me as you will,
(it is not for me to judge)
but please send me comfort
soon.

Hiroshima, The Day After the Bomb

The graffitied walls in Japan
remind me of caves I've seen painted
with the remains of loved ones.

I sold my pocket watch
to a traveling salesman
who insisted he needed one.
I, myself, have given up on time.
Time is useless,
is an endless cycle.

Musing that I'll have nothing to measure my poems to,
I drink a bottle of bourbon
and lose myself to that timeless feeling you get
when you are so completely drunk.

He never saw them pick up their shovels
to dig a city out
from under itself.
He only read about it.
And he never saw them use bleach
to erase their relatives
from the otherwise starched white walls
of the grocery store,
the bank, the armory,
the churches, the factories,
the family homes.

Psalm 144

Praise be to the Lord my Rock.
I, humble Prometheus,
tormented by carrion clouds
who eat my faith daily,
beg of you – one last time –
an end to this.

Compulsive Déjà Vu

If once is an accident
and twice is a trend,
what is the thousandth time?
Obsessive?
Or something worse?

There is a man
whose mother's body
is a caricature of ash
on the side of an otherwise empty building.

When the entire city went about
washing away the stains
of their loved ones' lives,
this man refused.

Every day now,
he visits her portrait
to tell her about his day
and leave her fresh roses.

A hymn sung
in the ruins of a church
burned
from above,
floating along the path of least resistance.
Reminds me of stories
of men,
breathing water,
trying to shout
“It’s God’s will.”

Psalm 145

I will exalt you, my God the King;
your will, in turn, will exalt me.
I am the doubting champion of your faith;
your will be done.

It is something
to see one's life,
one's very existence,
turned into graffiti
on a random wall.

I can still taste sand.
Find it in my shoes
though I've emptied them out onto the carpet
of a thousand different bars and motels.
It sticks with you.

I drink to kill time before the thunder hits.
It's how I know I'm cut off.

I've learned to drink quickly.
I line up shots and down them like rain.
Morning always feels like shit.
The bourbon sticks with you.

A church service
ringing over the bells
that count the time.
Miles away
I hear the choir
bellowing faith
between every single footfall.

Left.
Pray for us all.
Right.
Pray for us all.
Left.
Pray for us all.
Right.
Pray for us all.
Left.

Psalm 146

Praise the Lord.

My body is weak
and wracked with sores.
I tremble with the earth at my feet.

Faith, though,
in you I have.
Your works stand before me.
I have heard your hymns.
Seen the steeples in your honor.

I must recommit myself to you
now
before I fall fully to tatters.

The chorus blunders on
in my head,
wailing along with the rising wind,
(That saved a wretch like me.)
Ignoring my overpowered heart
and the terror that grips my chest,
(And Grace, my fears relieved.)
ignoring even all sense of meter
and rhyme,
(The Lord has promised good to me.)
blundering, toiling on
in their own naiveté.
(When we've been here ten thousand years.)
(When we've been here ten thousand years.)

The storm comes on like a bullet train.
A woman runs through the beginning rain,
trying to cover her geraniums
and pull a tarp over her rhododendron.
Nothing is going to save those plants.
They will be washed down to the river,
maybe out to sea.
She, however, believes there is room
for personal will at a time like this.
If she doesn't make it inside soon,
she too will be washed to sea.

I count stars to bring sleep,
but here there are too many,
and sleep won't come
until I count them all.
Two thousand three hundred eighty-eight.
Two thousand three hundred eighty-nine.
I would give anything for more bourbon
to knock myself out cold.
Two thousand three hundred ninety.

He had seen the fates
of places like El Derramadero
before.

It was all like a nursery rhyme
in his mind.

God turned the walls to rubble.
God turned the people to ash.
God turned to world to nothing.

The water in my lungs tastes of salt.
But I am too tired to make light of this.
This forced diaspora is too boring.

Only so many lines can I write
about this mindless wandering.
This endless wilderness.

There is always a beginning,
a middle, and an end.
I cannot remember where this started.
Or when.
This is all a prolonged middle in my head.
Or a prolonged end
is as likely.

We pretend time runs so smoothly.
Like German trains, or some other metaphor.

But there is no time here –
in my world.
Place only.
As if that was any help.

Psalm 147

Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.

I repeat this to myself
as a means of marking out my time.

A metronome of faith.

My marching is becoming tedious
like this believing.

Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.

I have become a caricature.
So when I ask the portraitist on the pier
in this tourist trap town
to paint me,
he only told me it would be redundant.

And with time carrying on
like a bad novel
I've nothing reasonable left to do except curl up
and drink myself blind.

I am quaking
with the ground at my feet.

And only a moment ago
I was wasting breath
complaining about my dampening clothes
in this silly rain.

Déjà Déjà Vu

This is all so God-damned repetitive.

A few tales get better
the longer they carry on.
This is not one of them.

The moonlight falls in columns
from the fretted sky.
Makes the night a pantheon.
Life is small.
Aphorisms are worthless
against the weight
of a single drop of rain.

The clouds fit together
like puzzle pieces
to form a picture
of rain.

Always rain.
Never a cat.
Never a barn surrounded by trees.
Always rain.

The Twelve Plagues

After years of doing this,
I have learned to wake
with a start
when the wind picks up.
Even the slight rustle of leaves
draws me from sleep.

I sometimes pretend this is why I am so tired all the time.
But even this doesn't explain my sore feet.
Or the way my eyelids ache, when I close them.

This all makes me realize that the pharaoh
had it easy.
At least he had variety.

I keep praying to these saints
like so many middlemen.
Burning candles almost out of spite
at this point.
I leave a trail of wax
in the furrows my feet make.
And in the periphery,
angels circling like buzzards,
waiting to feed on backsliders.
Here I am,
pitying a ship captain
rather than the would-be hero thrown overboard.

Psalm 148

Praise the Lord.

And yet my faith is waning,
like the moon above,
becoming a sliver of its former self.

The astronomy of faith
is something, always,
to consider.

Promises, here,
are worth as much
as a drop of rain.
Even the rivers, here,
are drowned.

Praise the Lord
the poets wrote.
But that was so long ago.
Now, what,
has He tired of the clocks He's made?

There's a city of salt,
built as amends
for a wrong
that no one can recall.

It's worth being the focus of postcards
you could send to every lover you've ever had,
with the sun gleaming across its towers
and delving deep into the dirt
the whole thing rises from.

Somewhat more eerie in moonlight.

I daydream, walking,
that I change places
with the crows,
or sparrows, or vultures
airing themselves out
in the sky above.
I would give anything
to stop walking
and let the air feel heavy
beneath me.

Psalm 149

Praise the Lord.

As I lift my pen tonight,
I can't help but wonder
just what the plan is.

Is some celestial wager placed on me as well?

This book you're writing of me
is a punishing text.
Something the zealots will be thankful for.

Or am I missing something?

I'm tired of writing about your plants,
and animals, and music.
I want an answer to this.

Dante, blind, in a bed somewhere
dreaming of Beatrice,
while I'm scribbling sonnets and waltzes
into the margins of my notebook,
and hiding it from the rain that
always
gets in, through the seams
and stitches
and right angles
of this dilapidated tent.

How would Dante
and Virgil
have felt
if Beatrice,
at the end,
were just a fine roof to sleep beneath?

I've been wandering so long that a bottle of bourbon can't touch me.
I'm not even slurring.
My vision only blurs
the greens of spring
with the oranges, golds, and reds of autumn.

I only know I'm drunk
when I start envying Stevenson,
for at least he traveled with a donkey.

And yet
I would give my left leg for a bottle of bourbon.
Or my right.
Or whatever else you might damn want.

But I'm in the middle of a vast forest,
drinking water.

I suppose bourbon isn't even the highest item on my list.
Maybe a good pair of shoes.

The fourteen psalms of exile
are a joke.
Struggle ended so quickly
is not struggle.
A minor setback merely.

This makes me reconsider everything
else in your little book.
Lot's wife as a gesture
of concern regarding thyroid health.
Forty-two children all
licked by and cuddling with she-cats.
Plagues of stubbed toes
and mislaid keys only.

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord.

The books never get it right, do they?
In the beginning,
there was you.

I wake up some mornings
trying to pretend this is the beginning of my story
even as memory insists
on narrative structure.

This is the middle.

Other mornings,
I want so very much to believe
that this is the ending.
Still other mornings, I think about making it so.

These days, my shoes never quite dry.
The sun never lasts nearly long enough.
And it's not just the spilled bourbon this time.

In an old song my grandmother taught me
they sing that the sun never shines on closed doors.
That is what I am.

Do you think
Job ever thought to himself
“Boy, I bet they turn this
into a book some day”?
Certainly,
he never could have foreseen
that it would be a bestseller.
Nor that it wouldn't be placed
amongst the crime novels.

This is a book of exile.
Adam and Eve,
Jonah,
Moses,
Noah and his animal crew,
Lot and his daughters,
his wife mercilessly left behind.
Do not forget Lucifer.
This is a who's who of the lost and forgotten.
Add my name to the list.

The drumrolls of thunder keeping time in the orchestra of lightning.
The world needs more pan flutes.
Instead heavy bass
and cymbals flashing.
We can only wait out the coming coda of suffering.

Some would pray for manna, here.
I would rather
Hemlock.

The sun brings with it,
from the horizon,
another town.
I can see its steeple climbing,
slowly,
the sky
behind the sun
like a weary follower
unable to keep up
any more.

I once dreamt only
in haikus in the springtime,
holding crocuses.

That was so long ago,
now,
I dream of then.

Outside a town I passed through,
three men were hanging.
People like this are never subtle
in their warnings.
I mention it only
because it reminded me
of one of the stories in your little book
and I couldn't help but wonder
if one of these men was a scapegoat too.

The lightning-fed tree trunks
are withering
even as the roots undo.
God, dismantling his work,
like a temperamental boy.

Next are the cicadas
that badger on
not letting me fall asleep.

Zeno's Paradox
Proof 1

God was never merciful,
if you read between the lines.
And so here I am,
battered and helpless
to a plague of time.

Dear John Letter

I've got a postcard set to mail
but I could never afford postage
to send it to you
and I've nothing really to say.
Just a note to tell you we should end this.

I am wearing tracks
through this dirt
and this Bible
with my feet and finger,
tracing my progress on the earth
and the meandering sentence
on the page.

Twin tracks
for the buzzards to follow.

The clouds are weighing so heavily upon me.
I struggle walking.
Shrugging my shoulders is out of the question.
So,
ask me no questions.
I really have no answer for you now.

The sky is closed
like in the books I've read
where there is only suffering.

The thunder has taught me this pessimism.

The sky keeps fraying,
flaking off and falling down
upon our hunched shoulders
as we trundle through doors
to escape the crushing winter.

The world is collapsing.
Beneath the weight of the snow
and the accumulating sky
on my shoulders,
I will soon be disfigured.
I'm already finding it difficult to walk.

My feet used to hurt,
it's true.
Now, they are just numb.

My fingers, crippled.
My eyes, always sore.
There is still no shortage of pain.

I take comfort, though,
in haikus.
And dreaming.
And turning this all to verse,
some snake oil medicine.

My body feels like it is disintegrating back into the clay
from which it came.

I exhale
and collapse like a sniveling child.

I've worn my feet to tatters.
Still,
sleep refuses to come.

Baptism

The river washes his feet,
years of dirt and decay
that had gathered between his toes.

It carries his sorrow
away with the silt.

Theophany in the Garden

Trembling earth,
I would hold you in my hands.
Taste your salted flesh.
Breathe a life into you.

Though the fig tree should not blossom,
I, of mud and breath,
have flowered into poetry
for suffering.

insert heroic couplet

Brian Morris
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 S Maryland Pkwy
Las Vegas, NV 89154

Education:

Masters of Education from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
Received December 2011

BFA in Creative Writing, with a Minor in English from Penn State Behrend
Received December 2008

Work History:

Graduate Assistant at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas
I taught ENG 101, ENG 102, ENG 407A and worked at the Writing Center.

Document Specialist at Industrial Sales and Manufacturing
I wrote and reviewed all internal documents, manuals, work instructions, etc.

Graduate Assistant at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
I ran a computer lab for the Health and Physical Education Department.

GSI for Penndot
I worked on a road crew for Penndot for two separate summers.

Groundskeeper at the Smethport Country Club
I worked out on the course, running a weed eater mostly.