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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  
of the requirements for the

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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.