

# WE HAVE INTIMATED TOO MUCH OF OURSELVES TO THIS CITY

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## **About the Author**

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**POINTS OF VIEW****I.**

I took a picture of the river.  
I want you to look at the other  
compositions surrounding it:  
shabby houses, sprawling dry hills,  
and in the center, a boy  
underneath the murky current, settled  
like a log.

Look at him closely: eye sockets like caves,  
a crack on his head like a zip line.  
Now tell me his story. Tell me what I need to know.

**II.**

Let's say there is a boy who passes by the river every sundown. Around him, portraits of hope.  
Above, the cinnamon sky.

Let's say the boy is the central news of the town. The town a mute chronicler of this event.

The day and its speculations. The night and its persistent prayers.

Let's say the boy is in search of home. Let's say he has found one and permanently stays there.

**III.**

What does it mean when we say: *Is the boy's story about to end?*

Or when we declare: *The boy's story is at the end of the line.*

## IV.

Given the images blurring in the water.

Given the suspicions thickening in the air.

Given the palpable presence of regret.

Given the grainy portrait hanging on the wall.

Given the gestures that precede night time.

Given the rhetoric of letting go.

Given the transportation of a noun into verb into noun.

Given the word *stay* as wish and order.

Given the perils of metaphor.

Given the varieties of *there, there, there*.

Given the narratives that begin with *Once there was a boy*.

## V.

Each day the neighbors talk in versions of optimism.

There is a confidence that insists and recurs.

That growing faith in the fate of the boy.

But it has been a year since.

And now the nights are empty. There are other stories to tell.

Like the texture of drying fields in the summer, or the soreness

That creeps around wounds of a child.

The only thing left is imagination.

Still a secret. Still a life.

**VI.**

When we talk about the boy we are probing the absence of clarity. We are trying to generate beginnings, one after another. *Close your eyes*, the elders would say. *And you'll see him, sleeping in the woods, his chest ripped open, his mouth shaped by the last word that had escaped it.* There are witnesses to this plot we hardly let go: the countenance of stones, the movements of minnows, the wind that echoes our hopes for the disappeared. Somewhere, a pack of kids jumps into the river and glistens under the toasting sun. We tremble in fear, in broad daylight, at dusk time, again and again. We look at the sky with devotion and request. We open our mouths and utter the alphabet for saints. How does a story progress from here?

**ATTACHMENTS**

In the marketplace near the church,  
where fruits are sold

and not bought,  
or where a kid is left

and not sought,  
we hear a woman seller deliver

the litany of commerce  
like a eulogy,

that when she places her hand  
on the roundness of an apple

all we can think of  
is the image

of a stillborn child.  
And from this view

we further begin

the recounting of what resides here:

blood on the pavement  
affirming what might happen

again happened,  
untended underbrush telling

of failures we fail  
to admit with grace.

Yet we choose to say nothing  
to each other's faces

in the day's regular haze  
of events. Because we rather keep

the sum of our losses  
in prayers. In this city,

things do not fall apart  
but together,

so we hold on  
to what has yet to collapse.

There is a word  
to all that we keep whole

amidst the wreckages  
we meet and may foretell:

perhaps *acceptance*,  
or *endurance*,

or something more  
intimate that assembles us

in this landscape  
we insist to call *ours*.

Stay we must, indeed,  
in the here and now

full of abandonment.  
We are hurting no more.

### VISITATION

You come closer to the door and say the word *hello*.

But there's no one to answer, the house a sheer structure  
of dereliction. You vaguely recall this scene: a belt

breaking the seams of tension, a fist  
pounding the floor, footsteps, a message

the day after. It's been years since  
and you are convinced of returning. The self

now prepared, stale facts dispelled, intense pride com-  
pelled

to die down. *Hello*, you again say, excitement  
depleting in every silence, the rebound

of sound in empty space. *Where are they?* Around  
you:

daylight, the tarnished beauty

of the once known. And so this must be clear now:  
between you

and this house stands bereavement. Stinging agony

in the body, memory that waits to be  
unhinged. *How can such waiting be summarized to this?*

Just a visit, never a return. The horizon points

to many directions from here: cities you've been to,

families you have owned.

You have endured enough.

There's a place to go, there's a decision to be made.