



RAMBLES WITH NATURE

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I am given to long peripatetic walks through outlying districts. Past rust-encrusted fences and cement-block lots, along fetid, long-stilled waterways next to crumbling skeletons of once-thriving commerce abandoned bathtubs half-filled with dirt over a once-upon-a drawbridge by a door-less port-a-potty down a street where two forgotten row-houses leftover from some long-ago together hold a single family and one of the children now six runs across the empty street and an older sister turns excitedly to an exhausted mother and exclaims: “He crossed the street on his own! It’s his first time” and there he beams from across the wide, empty asphalt expanse of a road that no one travels.

WHAT IS THIS?

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When moving through outlying districts, it is better not to catch anyone's eye. Look away. I continue past the scene pretending not to notice the life-event of the small boy who lives in two row-houses either leftover or stunted and forgotten then I trundle Giacometti through a wide intersection with a broken stoplight and a far-off view of the city looming down an ant-strewn highway screaming toward the center of the earth the sound of the sea the smell of car exhaust the sky glass blue.

A tractor-trailer truck idles, lost and waiting either empty or full. Warehouses pull up out of the ground and splinter with Chinese lettering open maws expose massive corrugated boxes filled with plastic ducks or fireworks or cheap gold-look earrings just offloaded from some cargo ship and brought here to the bored man with a cigarette and a clipboard standing outside the yawning hole.

I can feel his eyes on me as I pass, my hair now plastered to my head and my shirt soaked through. I look at the ground.

A cemetery appears on my left splayed out like a knock-down fighter laid low by Jack Johnson before Jack Johnson was arrested for transporting a woman across state lines for immoral purposes even though the White woman was his wife. Johnson fled to Montreal and then Paris, South Africa and Mexico, before returning to serve his jail sentence in Leavenworth.

By Karen Schaubert

Hektor unzips his pants, letting them drop to the [...]

No one told you grief would affect you like this

By Anne Summerfield

You crave pistachio ice cream like a pregnant woman, [...]

Transmuted

By Nicholas Olson

He caught convo snatches as they rode the red line: [...]

The cemetery goes on and on and on
drunken gravestones staggering up one hill
and over and then in the distance another
staggering ramble and after that smaller and
fog-shrouded yet another.

My breath comes in rasps a bug skitters by a
far-off siren moans someone's fate the sun
overhead punches into my skull my sweat-
soaked shirt now sticking jelly to my skin I am
walking I am crossing I am passing I am
underwater I am. Am I here? Or somewhere
else?

Two

When I'm tired, I walk along the four white
walls of my apartment, the ceiling overhead
pristine except for the dead web in one corner
hanging ineffectually. I lie on my back and
stare and stare, the lights shimmering
through my window onto clean surfaces:
water. Maybe this is best, I think — to ramble
into eternity here in the small room.

Here, I can be anything. Here I can be
everything I never will be.

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*Tom Block is a playwright, author of five
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