

Michael Ogletree

**Tête-à-Tête**

The cigarette keeps repeating  
itself to me in that same old  
raspy voice, and the streetlamps  
are nodding, beginning to agree:

You are not coming home.

The coffee cups are curdling  
their cream, the beaches have  
declared a shortage of sand.  
In the first house I never lived in,  
a woman weeps and sings my name  
over and over, "Spillian, Spillian...."

On my evening walk, I was mugged  
by a pinball stuck in the bumpers.  
He spoke to me like a kaliedoscope,  
and I was paradigmatically thrilled.  
He knew you, knew that no one does.

Your brittle feet on hardwood floors  
pull me away from caressing demons  
and give my sleepy ears cavities.

Knowing my appetite, you have  
set the table for a courseless meal.

## Trap

Up until the last bus arrives  
I will be sitting on this bench  
faithful as pollen to bees  
with my head up and mouth wide  
swallowing stars  
knowing perfectly well  
they are shards of glass  
but when that bus comes  
baby oh honey oh baby  
with its hazmat showers  
and grinning morticians  
and all-you-can-eat knuckle sandwiches  
and wall-eyed beauty queens  
cheerfully sneering their lives away  
and when it comes oh baby  
like a fish  
like a goddamn dagger  
and thickens the air with breath  
the bile sweet in your throat  
keep the razor under your tongue  
and kiss like there's no tomorrow

## A Letter From the Flagpole

I am south and it is Tuesday,  
concave above me propping  
me up. All-day planes excrete  
sedatives in bubblegum-toothed  
mouthfulls. Late afternoon  
is a lexicon of free-form jazz  
and malice. Look under your tombstone-  
a sparrow's nest! We cannot compete  
with that technology. As I mentioned,  
the new money is omniscient, spending itself  
into surplus. Ten years ago, we'd have  
all been dead from laughing. Tell  
your bicycle to stock up on breadcrumbs;  
it's gonna be hills of night  
before the market opens.

Oh my little barricade,  
I'll be your trashcan. Parade  
the barbed-wire through  
the newly renovated district  
of gentrification and it'll charm  
their pants off. If you were in here,  
there'd be no question of who  
to arrest. The path of least resistance  
is behind the bullets—you're well  
overdue to refinance. Pull the bark  
of your skin off like petals and make  
a wish. Tomorrow's already out of style.  
You'd better take an aspirin. They're coming  
up on "pleased to meet you" and all that blather.  
Well, skip to my loo and fuck you, too;  
the alphabet plans to revolt.  
Screech if you want, but those flames  
are gonna fall like faeries on heroin.

## On Blood and Other Consummate Mythologies

which caress your veins as you sleep  
nude through the afternoon. Lost prophets  
of air-conditioned apartments, didactic  
spewings more Barbary Coast than brimstone...  
As I fizzled like a square in your ashtray,  
I thought of the sage at his microscope,  
his piety heartless, efficient, iconoclastic.  
It's all smoke and semaphore until the weight  
hits the bottom. If there is no river,  
why build a bridge? My daydreams are gazelles  
hunted by smokestacks, and you are a valley  
of benedictions, penicillin, and apple pie.

*Michael Ogletree is the poetry editor for SUB-LIT Literary Journal. He just wrapped up a ten-year stint as an undergraduate. Michael is leaving these United States to study literature and write poems in Germany with a graduate fellowship at the University of Mainz. His new work appeared or is forthcoming in Lily, Right Hand Pointing, and Death Metal Poetry, among others. His mother says his poems sound pretty, but she doesn't always know what they mean.*