

Henry Crawford

as you clicked [on that hard drive snapshot]

as] you combed your watery hair
as] the photographer chatted up your mom
as] sister snapped her bathing cap
as] the family marched to the diving board
as] the photographer set up the pose
as] the Ocean Motel offered a terrace layered backdrop
as] the sun wore off its color
as] sister beamed a bathing beauty smile
as] mom clasped your open shoulder
as] you turned one eye away
as] the photographer shouted, “now!”

as] the camera filled with visible light
as] a solo wave broke anonymously away
as] you slid into the pool
as] the diving board sprung back
as] you broke the plane of water
as] chlorine re-closed your eyes
as] they all walked back into forgotten time
as] each pixel lights up in a window looking out
as] you screen the reverse miracle of years
as] their night was coming ashore

Driving in a Car

I am driving. I am driving in a car.
Stores going by. Some already gone. Streets holding up
a mirror to my wheels. Lapping up the surface of the earth.
The night is all comets unconsciously coming at us.
And I am driving into the space between the lights.
What would they look like on the other side of earth?
To the people there? Walking with us in our steps?
Their feet touching the bottoms of ours.
Walking on our reflections. All without a whisper.
Just passing by.
And I am driving. I am driving in a car.
I have a radio aimed at the sky. The waves are silent
until they burst into song. Then they go back to waves
as if that was their one sacred calling.
As if the lights of all these buildings were really stars
with their own private gravity. Held in the arms of an
empathetic galaxy spinning down like a figure skater
with time accelerating and falling into a pillar of speeding grace.
And I am driving. I am driving in a car.
And watching. I've traded in my daylight
for headlights. Water for evolutionary eyes.
I've come to see this city alive. Its double helix boulevards running
two ways down a one-way street. And I am driving to meet
the people who brought me here. The invisible dead.
It's hard to think of them going about their tasks
or even combing their hair. Yet I am driving in a car.
Seeing with their eyes. Reaching with their hands.
My father caught me peeing in a bush.
His smile regaled me in the sins of the living.
My eldest father held the dying hand of a Babylonian prince
and built for him a wall of continuous living cells.
The machine inside the ghost. The engine under the hood.
And I am driving. I am driving. I am driving in a car.

Four Small Stories

1. A small boy witnesses the death of his father.
A week later he goes into the father's closet and picks out one of his ties. He struggles with the ends, unable to fasten the knot.
[The boy is the brother in story #4.]

2. A mother searches her son's desk draw.
There is a small glassine bag of heroin in the draw but she doesn't see it. It's underneath a diary that she is afraid to open.
[The mother is the woman in story #3.]

3. A woman stands on a street corner waiting.
She's going to ask her husband for a divorce.
Just as he arrives she goes to check her face in a store window but is unable to see herself.
[The husband is the father in story #1.]

4. A man seeks forgiveness from his brother.
It is an old wound. They sit down across from each other in a diner booth.
They talk until they have nothing more to say.
[The man is the son in story #2.]