

Thou Shalt Not

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off ...”

Isaiah 27:12

And he shall scatter his holy seed across the weathered slats of the park bench. And the Lord shall be seen by the passersby, and be accosted and berated as a reprobate.

And it shall come to pass that the Lord shall be taken into custody, and be sentenced to community service, and be labeled a sex offender, and He shall be made to knock on every door in Nazareth, proclaiming his wantonness and his danger to the innocent.

And it shall come to pass that the Lord shall be unable to find a job, and shall sleep in ditches, and scavenge food from the dung heaps that even dogs refuse.

And it shall come to pass, one cold Christmas Eve, that the Lord shall freeze to death in the alley behind the temple, while the Pharisees, beating off in the privacy of their own homes, drink brandied eggnog in front of the fire, and shall, with much rejoicing, sing.

Considering Borges

after Christopher Smart

Borges is the name of the cat I do not own.
For I am allergic to cats, though I am not allergic to Borges.
For how can one be allergic to an idea?

For Borges, despite his satiny, orange fur, has yet to be born.
For he awaits my further evolution.
For Borges has the patience of pyramids and the faith of fools, and he will not come
until I am ready.

Of course, I may be mistaken.
There is a not insignificant chance that Borges has already come
and gone, that I have missed him, that I have passed, unawares,
the soft padding of his feet down a carpeted stair
I have simultaneously tread, but heading in the opposite direction.

For Borges is no sycophant, no beggar.
For Borges will not call attention to himself.
For Borges is complete, a tiger in his own mind.

For Borges is at the center of the labyrinth and I his blind follower.

On the Way to Avalanche Lake, I Read the Bible

And after hiking many hours and many miles,
I arrive at the lake, and the lake is frozen,
and I find, lying there on the shore, a sharp
and grievous heavy rock, which I take
unto my hand, and I do bash the rock
upon the frozen waters, over and over,
until I have hacked a hole in the ice
whose measure exceeds the measure
of myself, and I do rise and strip naked
and lower my body into the hole,

and then my testicles do scream
a most horrendous scream, a blood-
curdling scream, and the great granite slabs
that tower a thousand feet above the lake
do echo back the scream my testicles did scream,
so that every beast that creepeth upon the land,
and every fowl that flieth through the air,
will know that frozen waters are for fools
and fishes only, and that I did not bring a towel,
or hot tea, or any lunch, and that it is an unholy
long and windy way back to the car.

A Sort of Innocence

On the far wall of the canyon, their stone shadows play
games of imagined intimacy that they have never known.

The thin one is down on his knees, his hands raised
cupping the great curves of her shadowed breasts.

She leans into him while from behind her a larger shadow presses.
They play these games without touching. Like constellations,

great distances lie between the stars of their wanting.
And though years later, when they find themselves on the edge

of Nevada, bringing these shadows, and more, to life,
the burning nebulae of their bodies will bring them no closer

to heaven than they were that day in the desert – dancing
toward the rest of their lives as though it were shadow play,

nothing heavier between them than light.

The Flutes of Impossible Shepherds

The flutes of impossible shepherds
play just out of hearing, just below
the engine's buzz, the wheel's squeal,

the rattle of shopping carts,
just below the conversations
on the street corner, or on the bus,

below television commercials, ringtones,
alarm clocks, below clanging coins,
braying politicians, the jet's roar.

The flutes of impossible shepherds
play night and day, without ceasing,
but only if you look for them,

only if you listen, for they will not play
without an audience, nor will they
take your money.

But after you hear them, you are lost,
like a pet dog, who, lying on the porch,
hears the coyotes calling out

from the darkness, rises, and walks
away from the little circle of light,
into the howls of his final becoming.