

Nighthawks, Kaua'i  
*Hamura's Saimin, Lihu'e*

Edward Hopper likely never traveled here,  
but it's 10:21 on Sunday; outside, yellowed light  
streams across the empty asphalt to the dumpster  
by the Salvation Army where pickers find the choice leavings.

They're in the shadows, and inside the night-blue restaurant,  
three late diners sit at counters: two top left,  
a man and woman; alone, a man sits near the door.  
Behind, an older waitress leans looking off.

The man alone, khakis, a navy golf polo,  
forks noodles with shrimp, broth dripping; he considers  
returning to his empty room. The couple, heads together,  
he murmuring, split a won-ton appetizer. Her sarong

barely covers her light bikini. His board shorts, bar t-shirt,  
seem grimy. He drains his Bud, wants to go.  
She hasn't touched her Coke, isn't sure, looks away.  
The waitress, a glance at the clock, remembers her son in bed.

A Cycladic Harp Player, Marble, c. 2700 – 2300 B.C.

*The Getty Villa, Malibu*

Seated, harp at rest, you've waited  
buried, excavated, glass encased,

four thousand years or more.  
Someone revered you, your words,

your melodies, enough to invest the time,  
the tools, the marble. And you were treasured

and are. Before our history your histories,  
your literature caught image enough

that someone invested in this sculpture.  
A god? are you some god for memory

or intent or value set for times,  
ancestors past, or simply a good tune,

escape from labor's bold tyrant  
of all our days? Anticipating

the view of you, not crowded to  
the Cycladic art exhibit, a room,

I try to hear your music, your words.  
But you don't play, your harp at rest,

completed? yet to begin? discerning  
what to play, how the audience unfolds?

And that is what we do,  
you and I, with God, with life,

with beauty on an inexpressible morning,  
an audience who needs the image from our past

that grants this moment holy meaning,  
tomorrow sacred as we plot our play.

*St. Francis Venerating the Crucifix* (ca. 1593)  
by Domenikos Theotokopoulous (El Greco)

*(to be read antiphonally)*

Long-fingered and graceful his hands, veined so like the crucified Christ,  
the gray-robed monk, his cloak heavy and patched,  
adoring, gazes at the crucifix, topping a yellowing skull.

His Bible closed and marked, his grotto rock and dark,  
the tonsured priest, gaunt, eyes sleepless with prayer,  
enraptures presented mystery: grace through his savior's death.

A cloud-filled sky, bare light through grotto face,  
cave light echoes browns, shadows, earth gray.

His adoration sparks, his devotion speaks,  
his saintly pose presents, his concentration folds,  
our interruption now? should we speak? keep silence?  
should we kneel with him? Grace extends here:

We stand in a foreground of peace, the cave floor beneath our feet;  
death conquers death; resurrection engenders miracle.

The Minotaur Etchings from Picasso's Vollard Suite  
*The British Museum Exhibition, July 2, 2012*

This morning, when I rose and saw you sleeping,  
night passed warm, and, your side, your leg,  
your thigh and hip, your arm covering your breasts,  
your back exposed, I stopped and stared; I almost  
climbed back in behind you. But  
you were sleeping. So I chained my beast back  
into his labyrinth. He'll come out, but not  
until he's gentled, combed, mannered, calm.

After Pierre Bonnard, "Table Set in a Garden," C. 1908

I should like a table in the sun,  
one with a cane back chair.

Remove the bread and even the wine,  
for I shall be sitting there,

my notebook open, a pen in my hand  
at my table in the sun,  
just writing a picture in the morning  
as the shadows begin to run.

All the garden in bloom I would see there  
would be colored bloom and grand  
with a rose deep violet and phlox in blue,  
each flower by breezes fanned.

I should sit at my table in the sun,  
the one with the cane back chair.  
I'd eat of the color and drink of the breeze,  
and I would feel peaceful there.