

STILL LIFE

Score

Birds are how the earth makes sense of heaven

~ Jay Hopler ~

Paul Rudy
b. 1962

Stringendo ♩ = 52

Transparent

Flute: *ff*, *p*, *n*

Horn in F: *ff*, *p*, *st. mute*, *ff*, *pp*

Trumpet in B♭: *ff*, *p*

Timpani: *ff*, *gliss*, *p*

Mezzo-Soprano: *mf*, *mp*
Heav-en! Ear - th.

Violin I: *ff*, *p*

Violin II: *ff*, *p*

Viola: *ff*, *p*, *sul pont.*, *p*

Cello: *ff*, *p*, *to pont.*, *pizz.*, *n*, *p*

Double Bass: *ff*, *pizz.*, *p*

A (bird-like a flute)

Fl.: *mf*

Timp.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vc. DB

(music continues...)

STILL LIFE

poems

JAY HOPLER



McSWEENEY'S
POETRY SERIES



McSWEENEY'S

SAN FRANCISCO

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*this book is for Kimberly Johnson
as is everything else as far as i'm concerned*

CONTENTS

Upon Learning that I Am the 51 st Most-Famous Person from Puerto Rico	1
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Chapter One

Radiation Vault 4	4
Meditation on My Cancer	5
self-portrait not looking	6
story problem	7
still life w/ hands	9
after the diagnosis: meditation on the origins of “death’s thin melody too (variations on an escalator)” by paul rudy	10
Some Lights Go Out	11
Parade	12
the canonization	13
reason for not moving	15
war comes to the island	16
the seawall	17
still life w/ wet gems	18
another afternoon	19
imaginary photograph sunset mother’s day davis islands florida 2020	20

The Sky Is Like the Sky in a Painting
by Pieter Bruegel the Elder 21

The Murder 23

The Trauma Sutra 24

Honky-Tonk Sonnet 25

Chapter Two

To My Wife on Our Anniversary 28

Swarm 29

The Church Gardens: A Walk 30

love & the memory of it 31

Loom 32

poem after a poem by césar vallejo
w/ a nod to donald justice 33

Erasure 34

The Vacation Over 35

Chapter Three

Discarded Memoir Titles 38

Duck & Groundcover 40

student evaluation of instruction: obituary edition 41

appendix 42

Memento Mori 43

Requiem w/ Eye Roll 45

Benediction 46

Benediction 2 47

Meditation on the Italian Cinema 48

still life w/ feet 49

Monster 50

meditation on folklore: a coda 52

family astrology 53

markers 54

obituary 57

Notes 59

Acknowledgments 61

About the Author 63

*Life does not cease to be funny when people die any
more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.*

—George Bernard Shaw

*Upon Learning that I Am the 51st Most-Famous
Person from Puerto Rico*

On a dripping, storm-lit, island afternoon
In 1970, my parents had an accident: Me.
There were no survivors.

CHAPTER ONE

Radiation Vault 4

O, let there be in here w/ me a moth
Whose DNA w/ mine will mix
When they flip the switch
& the room goes nuclear

That I may some days later sprout
A pair of wings that'll wing
Their sun-struck span

In a sky-wide, oil-slick rainbow.
& may the skull upon its thorax
Be the skull upon my back,
That Heaven may upon

That aspect cast its homicidal eye
When I flutter its porchlight, the sun,
& think the work already done.

Meditation on My Cancer

The toilets in the Bennett L.
 & Rose Wood Park men's room
Are metal & ring like bells
 When you piss in them.

Ring like rang no bell
 On the day I was born.
Ring like no bell will
 On the day I die.

Over the soccer fields roll
 The shadows of clouds.
In the piss-tolled bowl,
 A little billow of blood.

self-portrait not looking

i should have been the clover not the revolver the
hero throws at the monster after shooting it six
times didn't work i should have been the shirt of
bees the mousetrap not the tree skirt not the smell
of horses the florist not the flowers on this table
great orange blooms splashing upward through
eruptions of white lace & fern i should have been
this moon-gagged star-frightened night not the bowl
of drizzle a little bit of rain nowhere to go

story problem

Q:

if a train traveling west at 5 mph on an april
morning in 1884 strikes by the coal-
bins near lynn indiana your ancestor
wm. c. "cal" blizzard veteran of the late (civil)
war killing him & on that train is theodore
thomas & his orchestra on their way to chicago
& thomas 7 years later founds the chicago
symphony orchestra how many people
die in 1928 when the train chartered
by the independent order of foresters
of newark new jersey & driven
by your father's father the man
for whom you were named strikes a sedan
at the chestnut street crossing in dunellen

A:

at the chestnut street crossing in dunellen
nj there stands no plaque to the 1 man
2 women & 4-month child crushed in
their sedan
the coalbins near lynn were monuments to
the driven
not the driven-over your own mother

has refused you a headstone though cancer
is erasing you b/c no body concerns her just the soul
just as well monuments like chicago's
orchestra hall are reserved for the note-
worthy: writers w/ readers founding conductors
the rest of us are lucky if they spell
our names correctly on the death certificates poor
relations all we molder in whatever soil
sure hope your mother is right about the soul

still life w/ hands

poor dumb lugs what loves you not the butterfly knife not the
corkscrew not the thumbtacks scattered at the back of the
junk drawer the fishhook
would kiss you no differently than it would a trout's soft
mouth the swiss army knife the icepick
the wood chisel you'd bleed a lot less if you were a church or
its steeple
its anemic steeple

*after the diagnosis: meditation on the origins of
“death’s thin melody too (variations on an escalator)”
by paul rudy*

arezzo middle of a sunday night in february the city silent save
a hillside escalator moaning its rust to the ice mist

p said the sound made him think of a solitary monk wandering
the tuscan hills

a said it sounded like the world’s oldest novice polishing
an oculus

s said there was something of the sea about it a widow’s walk
w/ widow walking

t said it sounded like priapus having his way w/ a grecian urn

but the sound was more forlorn: a sub destroyer’s sonar ping
beating the hull out of a submarine or a hearse w/ a bad axle

squeaking its grief all the way to the grave-
side no line of mourners following behind

i said nothing of the kind

Some Lights Go Out

Bolt-struck steers, we stood & stared
 Into those spaces in between
 Our faces & the TV screen
& waited for the floorward
 Drag of gravity on our dumb,
 Meat weight. It did not come.

Stuck-in-upright, stunned, we stayed,
 Gobs spittle-slicked & slack,
 Until that screen went black
("Have we lost power?" "I'll say—")
 & we in darkness found
 Ourselves, wound-

Woozy to the point of swoon.
 The world, a shambles. Blood
 & moan. All that here was good
Is gone. Our knocker's a buffoon.
 We've all been to the kill floor
 Swoggled by the horns.

November 8, 2016

Parade

In the foil-flash & rattle of wind-spun
Pinwheels, a marching band
To its tuba tunes & the bunting hung

From the porch rails rustles. A bird,
A bunting or something, rustles
In the rain lilies & a hearse

On loan from Bethlehem
& Sons Funeral Home, pulls a float
Trimmed w/ zinnias, prim-

Roses, & mums. Wave, wave,
You rainy lilies! You mist-slick lindens,
Lift your dripping limbs & wave!

Though it's the wind, its blah
Paroxysms, not patriotism,
That moves you, not the mob, its straw-

Hat hoopla. A Sousa blast, flat-
Brassed & blatted, startles from the lilies
Not a bunting but a rat. A wet rat.

July 4, 2017

the canonization

no man convinced he was going to die
on an island would on an island live
unless he wanted to die
on that island & i did

talk about an end rhyme
but my life's a poem my death's
been writing for a long time

& death abhors a well-wrought urn
i'm done

& they will burn me where i fall
the aspen clapping ashes
against the sky's blue wall
& they can burn these verses
too send us all to naught

let them revel in the smoke
let death upon my life
& life's work choke

i'm done
i leave death to work what urn

it will

my father was a sack
of ash my mother kept
on a windowsill for years after he passed
it didn't seem to cause him much distress
i left him on the island
when i left

davis islands florida 2020

reason for not moving

alligator mississippiensis has survived for millions of years
unchanged untouched by history
it stayed where God put it
when the other animals ran for the land bridge alligator took
a nap
when was the last time you found a beringian lion sunning
itself in your driveway
flat-headed peccary anybody
anybody

war comes to the island

look at that battleship made of clouds the thunderheads are
the conning towers the wisps of blue & gray are the waves
a squadron of pelicans lifts from the runway of seaplane basin
& peels off in the direction of the ship's darkling hull
when they ram it they disappear w/o a sound their bodies
do not fall from the sky

the seawall

the shallows glow an absinthe green & dark the bomber shapes
of sharks gliding low over the shoals of bone & shell
by the dumpster in the parking lot a seagull gives a grackle hell
over a french fry & a napkin ketchup'd by a pair of lips
the lack of wind has made the waves lazy i miss the *shhh* of
their unfolding up the narrow spits of sand the *ressst* of
their recessional sweep
the swallows swirl like coffee grounds at the bottom of the
sky's blue cup
what is the morse code for "truck backing up"

still life w/ wet gems

lightnings bang their jaggeds on the cloud-glower
the cloud-glower is a broken necklace spilling its wet gems
its wet gems w/ facets cut uncountable
uncountable the reflections of the world in those gems

uncountable the versions of the world into its dry self crashing
the shards of those worlds like shrapnel blasting skyward
slicing skyward or sidewise through the dune grass
the dune grass flattened by that splatter even as i write
the words

another afternoon

shinny up the mizzenmast
that's what some seagull is screaming
down in the marina right now
or is that a child for-real screaming
shinny up the mizzenmast

& after i've shinnied up the mizzenmast
then what shinny back down

stupid birdchild

*imaginary photograph sunset mother's day
davis islands florida 2020*

if the sky were whiskey i'd shoot the man who watered it down

The Sky Is Like the Sky in a Painting
by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Call the wingèd pig, the lute
Aflame in a lake of blood,
The skeleton riding a humming
Bird w/ the tail of a trout

& the face of a Flemish peasant!
Let be beneath every tree
A bird trap a burlap sack a three-
Headed arrow fletched

W/ a pheasant's tail feathers
& bid the light a Little Ice
Age presage (another one) rimy
In its bones! There are devils

In the heather, devils in the hay-
Ricks. The dark barns
Their steeds of bone
Disgorge over the late-day

Hills. The last low sunlight scrolls
Their shadows eastward
In a gnarl. O, to be a board
Warped into a breaking wheel,

The wine at the wedding
Of the accordion & the scorpion-
Eel, their marriage bed of broken
Glass! Anything is better

Than that burgemeester bare-
Assed & bleeding behind
Some burning dorp's ruined
Lacery, or the gut cart no cur

would crawl after so slicked
Is it w/ offal—. Even the vampire
Butterfly crucified to the spire
Of a church tower rickety

Of shingle & beam. Even the well
Down which a snaky infant
Is being dropped, fanged
Mouth cocked in a wail—

The Murder

The moon of ash is made & loves you like a muzzle flash.

Just ask the night garden, awash in all that autopsy light:
Every bloom's been chromed, honed sharper than a bone ax.

The moon of ash is made & loves you like a muzzle flash:
A bright so fast it doesn't clang, so loud it leaves a gash,

A hole still smoking in the dim-gleam, the starshine.

The moon of ash is made & loves you like a muzzle flash.

Just ask the night garden, awash in all that autopsy light.

The Trauma Sutra

On an altar sloppy w/ offerings—bouquets
Of daisies & baby's breath, chunks of rose
Quartz, a puddle of candle votive
In its lotus holder—a blue-eyed fly lands
Before the die-cast statue of a dancing god
& wrings its hands in prayer.

The news must not have been good.
You don't pray like that unless
You're trying to fill the hole
That just got punched through your gut.
Nothing fills that hole. You can make of it
W/ panes vinaceous a stained-glass oculus

Through which the spirit can be glimpsed,
Sometimes, in the summertime, at twilight,
When the sunlight honeys sidewise
& strikes that boss to red refraction.
Or, you can keep it open & let the spirit
Come & go as it likes.

Honky-Tonk Sonnet

a duet w/ Johnny Cash

Before cancer, I was a country.
Now—, I'm a fucking country
Song: job gone, house gone,
Wife diagnosed w/ Post-Traumatic Stress—
I'm missing more organs
Than a looted church.
Even my dog's been repossessed!
Know what I got left?
2 years. The lifespan
Of an average rat. My wife's therapist
Tells me I can use this time to find
Out who I really am. *Lord help me Jesus,*
I've wasted it, so / help me Jesus,
I know what I am: squeak.

CHAPTER TWO

To My Wife on Our Anniversary

In Castiglione del Lago, the pines are iron-spined.
When the wind blows, they stand still & the earth
sways. If only God had forged me thus! Forced into
a stooped form & told to straighten up, that's as
far as His blessings ever extended in my direction.
You know what keeps me from falling apart? Luck
& duct tape. Even so, those trees have nothing on
me. Blessed as they are, all they get to hold today
is a sick man's attention &, maybe, a few birds.

Swarm

Bees from a cleaved hive dive sky-
Ward, draw upon the raw, October
Air a hair shirt, a turret, a plague
Doctor (mask thereof), a single modest opera
Glove, & a clove of garlic in a star-
Lit cove. O, but when the wind its gusts
Gets in an uproar, that glorious swarm
Explodes, grows thin, explodes
Again & in an autumn's dimming
Is mistaken for some mist, a wisp
A *wasp* of smoke.

The Church Gardens: A Walk

Hummingbirds in blue blurs whirl
Necklaced around the nectar feeder,
 Each creature gleaming, bright,
 A piece of polished apatite
 Through whose facets sunlight
 Shatters into flashing gaslight
Shards that fall into the larkspur
& blaze up, igniting every flower.
 Each glowing petal blue proclaims
 The feast by bluer glowing.
 Bluer than a Day-Glo wing—
 & yet, though they in flames
 Are wrapped from stem to bloom,
 It is the fire the *flowers* consume.

love & the memory of it

spook not at the shook world w/ all its viruses & murder
hornets
instead that summer evening call to mind when you drove
alone over iowa
the light in the fields how long it was how in love you were
w/ it
& the air & the world & that girl that atomic girl you would
one day marry
or summon up a summer evening half a life from then &
the park by the river the way her laughter
echoed off the rocks
in sparks that sighed
into the water

it was she that lit the world just then
& not that ember of a sun
her light like a struck string fretting its zing against the pic-
nic tables

may that be the music you hear
when they unplug the ventilator

Loom

O, to shear some April's sun
& from its wool spin yarn
To weave a tapestry
Of flame, of fire stags leaping over trees
Black as candlewicks, packs of fire dogs
Burning bright behind
Them! O, to hang the thing
Before that cold, unbroken
Wall of sky, that it may flutter in the rain-
Light like some fire-
Wild Butterfly god!

On second thought—,
Let's fold it like a flag at a funeral & present it
To the first weeping woman we see.

poem after a poem by césar vallejo
w/ a nod to donald justice

i will die in the desert on a sunny day
b/c i was born in the islands
on a rainy one
i will die in the desert this cannot be helped
maybe on a friday as today is a friday at the beginning of
a cold spring

it will be a friday b/c today friday stoned & alone i drove
into the west desert & grieved
my own passing & never so much as today do i feel
in the middle of a 2-lane road
empty for 1,000 years in both
directions

jay hopler is dead his life was as easy as it got
& he had the scars to prove it
these are the witnesses: all the fridays & the rains & the sun
& the road & every grain of sand
in that desert

Erasure

The phone rings & surprise!
It's your mother calling & the last 40 years
Haven't happened: your father's alive,
Your sisters speak, your wife's days
Are not yet spent rehearsing for her widowhood,
& you, you are still a 16-year-old fuck-up
Who has stayed out too late w/o calling
Her—. Again.

If she could see the death mask
Your face has become, she'd know you'd paid
The bill for those mistakes. Those—, & 1,000
Others. All that bourbon to say grace over,
All your lapses. & you will say grace
When the time comes—. Believe that.
Until then—, all you can say is: *Forgive me,*
Mama. I'll be home soon. No need to worry.

The Vacation Over

The vacation over, see from the train
who remains on the beach playing, bathing in the waves;
their vacation isn't over yet:
is this how it's going to be
is this how it's going to be
to leave this life?

CHAPTER THREE

Discarded Memoir Titles

1.

O Carnival of Miracles! O Karmic Bazaar!:

& All the Robot Girlies Say Beep!:

Lost on the Milk Road of the Moon Upon the Water:

Too Much Quiet, Not Enough Peace:

So Much Will Outlive Me Why List It:

Musical Conversations w/ the Dead:

The Lesser Chub Is the Greater Fish:

Nothing Rhymes w/ Dead:

In the Museum of Natural Selection:

The Emperor of Firecrackers:

Still Life w/ Hash Pipe & ½-Peeled Lemon:

Hotel Disaster:

Hypochondriac, My Ass!:

Between a Rock & a Hardcase:

How Small the Heart of a Large Mouth Bass:

Fretful Prophet of the Electric Bass:

A Worm w/ the Sun in Its Belly:

Exit, Pursued by a Butterfly:

The Sun w/ a Worm in Its Belly:

File Under Fire, Trials By:

The Jay Hopper Story

2.

The Constant Elegist: The Jay Hopler Story (w/ John le Carré)

Duck & Groundcover

Meadows petaled turquoise.
They shiver like glacial lakes
Even when the sun shines.
A duck could be forgiven,
Then, the lack of grace
In a dry landing. The ooofff!
We each to Heaven send
At every bounce, a plea:
How about a little mercy,
For ducks' sake? What the duck
Must think the moment the lake
Reveals itself a field of blue
Flowers & a few sharp stones—.
O God, where did I go wrong—

*student evaluation of instruction:
obituary edition*

dr hoppler had bees for teeth his head was their ringing hive
dr hapler was haunted by the dogs he'd owned he talked about
them often & in distracted tones
dr hopper loved the words "oink" & "hootenanny" he hated
the word "breast"
dr holper made sad pelts grow back their animals
dr hippler pitched a natural sinker this is true this is beyond
doubt
dr holier swallowed the head of a swan & the swan's head
grew inside him until it was so big the swan's head replaced
his own head this was how he spoke
dr hoper loved his wife his wife his ocean was & his mountain
range spent in blue gentian
dr hooper was a poet i did not know it just kidding dr j you
rock give this man a raise

appendix

the shadows thrown by the wind-blown oaks comb the rose-
mary a crow lopes the phone lines
pole to pole i'm sorry no one is available anymore
on top of the compost mound coffee grounds & lemon rinds
shine w/ a light like dust moting to a slow gold

w/ a light like vellum foxing in an octavo forgotten on a high
shelf in a rare-books shop *the collected poems*
of jay hopler or rat fishing in baltimore
the bell above the door keeps its mouth closed
most days no one bothers turning on the lights

Memento Mori

If this street were a leaf-strewn bier
On which reposed a late-October light,
Its decomposing body dun as the sky
From which it fell, the fall air

Its frore & formless ghost, the odd
Walker haunted by it, his coat
Drawn close about his throat,
Then a skull upon the sidewalk

Chalked in a child's awkward hand
Would make one think of painted faces,
Spook costumes, & pillowcases
Fat w/ candy, but it's the end

Of June! Every dooryard garden's
A bedizenry of bloom!
Even the air, petal-plumed,
Is a sun-hot blossom goldening open!

How like them, the unscathed
Young, to remind us we're lost:
Hominem te memento. Respice post
Te. As mother used to say,

Nothing wrecks a beautiful day quite

Like a child—. & yet . . . , people
Still have them. Why? It's a bestial
Immortality. Better just to die.

Requiem w/ Eye Roll

No minister mild of manner, moon-
Faced over his tab collar,
My grandfather; rather, a gambler,
An embezzler, a loan
Shark, a con man, a womanizer
Booze-breathed & both feet on
The gas of whatever
Jalopy got left unlocked.
He even borrowed the gun he shot
Himself w/, the smartass.
Of course, he conked it
In a cornfield in Winchester,
Indiana, so that joke
Was on him—. Oblivion.
How's that for a punchline?

Benediction

The wind in swells through the wild rye rolls.
The bright sky dulls. Over the hills,
 Their green backs ringed with blue-
 Bells sunset-rung, flaps a wingy shadow west-
 Ward. A jay. Poor bird that no net
 Met nor gin it didn't love. Good luck,
You luckless scrub, you.
You dumb—, you *doomed*
 Sucker. God bless.

Benediction 2

The wind $\frac{whines}{winds}$ through the white pines

& the windchimes chime their tin-tined tongues

On the back deck. A $\frac{coaled}{cold}$ sky

Painted by Jacob van Ruisdael. *Windmill*

At Wijk bij Duurstede, w/o the windmill.

A windsock flaps. The grasses rasp. The aspens

Clap their $\frac{soughed}{soft}$ applause.

Autumn—, what's $\frac{done}{dun}$ is $\frac{dun}{done}$. The wind

Slips between the slats of the back fence.

$\frac{winds}{whines}$ through the slats of the back fence—

Meditation on the Italian Cinema

L'Avventura was too long for me.
What do I want w/ eternity?

still life w/ feet

they will never be mistaken for mosquitoes nor will they ever
convince a sexy renaissance scholar to prance it like anne
more when i'm all up in my donne
still i like them they remind me of unpainted russian torpedoes
they remind me of deep-trench anemones frilling up their
unlit tentacles
they remind me of sun-bleached sea fans
brittled on a beach they remind me of angels whose wings
have been repossessed they will never be mistaken for
right angles
but if i hold them high enough they block out the sun

Monster

The hornslug's not some hummock monkey
Posing mid-lope for a tourist's grainy
 Photograph. It's big enough to eat a calf,
 Tusk a hole in a fishing shack,
 Haul off & drown some kid
 Who didn't know enough not to swim
 In the river west of Shepherd Bend.

Any angler to a bad end comes who casts
These bends once the gloaming's passed.
 There hasn't been a picnic on these banks
 Since that couple were from their blanket
 Yanked & dragged away, never
 To be seen again. *The Bad Water*
 That's what the settlers called

This place, if they talked about this place at all,
Where no crickets trill, no birds call
 & the aspen cloned near the canyon
 Wall stay still no matter what the wind—
 The nights unmooned by clouds
 Glooming in; the river, a shroud
 Waiting for a body to cover—.

Some say it's 10ft stern to stem.
Some swear it scuttles; some, it worms

In the muck; but, on the horn
Spiraling from its forehead like a unicorn's,
Everyone agrees: a brown or mossy green,
It's sharp enough to spear a full-grown
Horse mid-ford. No pitch-forked

Horde those odds could even. Ask any boat-
Man w/ a hull up-scuffed from floating
Over rocks where no rocks should've been.
Ask a rancher through whose land
The river runs if a bullet can stop a bull
From being mauled
& dragged into the water.

Petroglyphed on nearby cliffs
Are legions of beings thronged w/ sticks
Ringing an enormous horned slug.
Anthropologists insist it's a fierce old god
& file it under "metaphor";
But it wasn't a metaphor
That gored that scout troop

Going after rafting badges south
Of Red Creek, the lot of them turned inside-out.
It's not a metaphor that stalks the rocks
Near Ox Point, its jaws cocked
For whatever comes to drink.
& everything comes to drink
Sooner or later.

meditation on folklore: a coda

fuck bigfoot my every star
on real monsters shines
i haunt my own
damned house in a body sewn
together by doctors
witch & otherwise
snakes behind my dim eyes
writhe & rattle-clack
their death-clock
maracas at every knee creak
& neck crack
i'm supposed to get the shivers
over some backwoods booger-
man don't make me laugh

hunter cancer hospital july 2020

family astrology

those aren't stars those are shards
of my mother's bone
china i recognize the family pattern:
shrapnel
they jag & flash like bone
shards in a searchlight's beam shined
on the ruins of a bombed-out house
my own
ground zero my ancestral
home where everything is already gone
& i that blasted abbey's truest none
not enough to shine a flashlight on
unless you count the urn
that spittoon retrofit for glory
in which i'm to spend eternity
alone & boneless my skies unstarred

markers

marble slate granite what's the difference
cross two sticks & lash them w/ a bit of twine
nail a slip of plywood to an old pick

handle or why not steal a toilet
& chisel it to one-up keats's final whine:
here lies one whose name was writ in shit

obituary

jay hopler was born the mint-condition-in-original-packaging-
action-figure-w/-kill-piggy-death-grip (collector's edition)
raised to be the bird trap in a painting by pieter bruegel the
elder he ended instead the empty birdfeeder around which
birds still gather
in between he was the horse-drawn serenade the
mythicgooberkhan the bowl of lemons every cloud that
ever looked like a lion
he was never drawn by the dawn parade to greatness though
he won great praise for his performance as the green vine
angering for life in book-tv's *the wallace stevens story*
for a moment in rome he was:

Jay Hopler,

The musical score is for a piece titled "Jay Hopler". It begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 52$ and a dynamic of *fff*. The score is divided into two systems. The first system features a piano part with a *Stringendo!* marking and a *Transparent* section. The piano part includes a *pp* (pianissimo) section with the lyrics "Heav - en, (mezzo sop)" and a *mp* (mezzo piano) section with the lyrics "Ear - th." The piano part also includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) section. The second system features a flute part with a *bird-like a flute* marking and a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic. The flute part includes a *mf* section with the lyrics "Ear - th." The score is written for piano and flute, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C).

he has been survived

NOTES

The italicized words in “Honky-Tonk Sonnet” come from Johnny Cash’s cover of the song “Why Me, Lord?,” which was originally written by Kris Kristofferson.

“poem after a poem by *césar vallejo* w/ a nod to *donald justice*”—the Vallejo poem my poem follows is “Piedra Negra Sobre Una Piedra Blanca.” I worked from the translation by Robert Bly and John Knoepfle, “Black Stone Lying on a White Stone.” It appears in *Neruda & Vallejo: Selected Poems*, edited by Robert Bly and published by Beacon Press. The nod to Donald Justice is directed specifically at his poem “Variations on a Text by Vallejo.”

Regarding “markers”: on John Keats’s tombstone, in Rome’s Cimitero dei Protestanti, this is chiseled: “Here Lies One Whose Name Was Writ in Water.”

The music in “obituary” was written for me by Paul Rudy, at my request. I asked him what he thought I would be if I were a piece of music. This music was his answer.

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“after the diagnosis: meditation on the origins of ‘death’s thin melody too (variations on an escalator)’ by paul rudy” is for Paul Rudy, Adrian Van Allen, Stephanie Malia Hom, and Tyler Travillian.

“Some Lights Go Out” was written at the request of Josh Gaines for *Not My President: The Anthology of Dissent*. It also appeared in *The Plume Anthology of Poetry* 6, edited by Daniel Lawless.

“The Trauma Sutra” is for Jessica Lynne Trese.

“The Church Gardens: A Walk” was written at the request of Nathaniel Perry for *Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*.

“Monster” was written at the request of Adam Thorman for his book of new cryptids and is based on one of his photographs.

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Thanks to Vivian Lamarque for permission to include here my translation of her poem "A Vacanza Conclusa."

To the Hopler, Johnson, Luce, Ralls, Reiss, and Rosen families: I love you all. I was so blessed to have been with you for a while.

To my Ashtanga family, love and gratitude. Until next time. Om śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ. Om peace, peace, peace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jay Hopler's first collection of poetry, *Green Squall* (2006), was chosen by Louise Glück as the winner of the Yale Younger Poets Prize; his second collection, *The Abridged History of Rainfall* (2016), was a finalist for the National Book Award in Poetry. As an editor and translator, his works include *The Killing Spirit: An Anthology of Murder for Hire* (1998), *Before the Door of God: An Anthology of Devotional Poetry* (edited with his spouse, poet and Renaissance scholar Kimberly Johnson, 2013), and *The Museum of Small Dark Things: 25 Poems by Georg Trakl* (2016). The recipient of numerous honors and awards, including a fellowship from the Lannan Foundation, a Whiting Award, a Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award, two Florida Book Awards, and the Rome Prize in Literature, he lives with his family in Salt Lake City.

