

Spitfire

This isn't the first time
back in Danbury
to visit my Grandfather, Father, Sister
but it's been
five years since I've seen
some of its more well-known
street walkers.

Driving on West Street
just past the pharmacy
and there is a gangly cricket
in the distance on his hind legs
creeping disjointedly -
Spitfire.

He must be 80 by now
and I'll bet he still drinks
that quart of milk for his rot gut
on those hot cement steps
behind the grocery store
in July & August -
stripped down to his motley t-shirt.
From his mouth the thin white
line of his arm pouring
like one long carton
connected to his shoulder.

Every afternoon it was the same scene -
skim moustache and sweat,
as if it was the last day
on earth to wash a purple heart.

I slowed my car down
to see how he changed
– he replaced the beat-up fedora
with a new one
but his face
was more or less the same,
a ghost of straight-jacketed howls
maybe softer, less stubble
a shaved baby's blanket
of wind pink jowls
holding two black marbles.

He crossed the street
with the familiar
old quirk,
as if there were mocking
children nearby
spitting fire from behind,
these .50 grinning mouths
of propellered tiger sharks
still hunting him
by machine-gunning his name.