

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Timothy Green: Four Poems

Timothy Green · Wednesday, June 11th, 2014

Timothy Green has worked for the last ten years as editor of the poetry magazine [Rattle](#). His poems have appeared in *Connecticut Review*, *Florida Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Nimrod*, *Pearl*, *Subtropics*, and other journals. His book, *American Fractal*, is available from [Red Hen Press](#). He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and daughter.

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### To Montevideo

*for Luanne*

We were double-sided tape, she writes,  
all adhesive. We were the hollow space

a shell curls around; the wrapping  
that is the gift. Like children boiling tea

from pine needles, it wasn't a thirst  
that moved us. You chased a soccer ball

around the world while I chased the world.  
We were like your speech—blunt and broken,

only as beautiful as it was meaningless.  
No way to say it more simply than that.

As her new husband stirs upstairs  
she folds the letter. Tongues the glue.

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### Poem from Dark Matter

First light through the limbs of the trees. And then  
the trees. Each morning the hum of traffic  
through the freeway wall. And then the traffic

we're bottled in. Each thing first betrayed  
by the shapes around it. As if shadows held  
all our weight. Like the empty space that props

each fiery nest of stars, the smooth circumference  
of every heavenly body toward which astronomers  
might dream. I'm at the kitchen window, early light.

Reading science for tea leaves. Pluto, it seems,  
is far colder than we thought. Even the constant  
speed of light is decaying. And look where thoughts

can lead: Somewhere in a lonely future, a man  
hears his heart stop beating long before the world  
goes black. So slow the rate at which nothing

approaches. Or maybe like an ostrich we'll outrun  
our past. And then our present. And this, my gift  
to you, whatever you'll make of it. The soul, a ship

in a bottle lost at sea. Drops its anchor anyway.

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## Hiking Alone

I shimmy out on sandstone and slate rock,  
past the soft ledges where the last shrubs

grow. I've got my camera, unshuttered and  
silent, ready to take back with me whatever

I've come here for—sore arms and a sunburn,  
blue sky like something new. At the floor

of the canyon far below a stream flows from  
nowhere to nothing, from one unseen cavern

to the next. I could think of a fish gazing up  
at that quick flash of sky as it passes through

the white froth of the rapids, the silky silver  
where the water pools. Oh, I am grey, I could

have him say, personified—moved, even  
full of emotion. Oh, my scales are golden-

green—I could give him color just as easily  
in the kind God of my imagination before

plunging him back into his comfortable

dark, this eyelet the only opening for miles.

How easy it is to paint epiphany, I think, like  
the gaudy sunset now settling above the tree-

line I could call a bruise or a blush, windburn  
on a woman's cheek, though it's only the

scattering of dust in low light, what one shakes  
from a shoe, combs out of stiffened hair.

How easy, too, it would be to slip off this ledge,  
to get lost out here, fall asleep on this rock and

let the cold night wake me. I could hold out  
on figs and freshwater; I could chew the fibrous

bark off a Joshua tree. I could love the moon  
like a mountain lion, stalk shadows, sharpen

sticks. Come morning I'd find the dirt road  
and then my car at the end of it. Brush the dust

off my pants. Buckle myself back into habit  
with a metal click like the sound of my one hand

clapping for joy—however briefly—at all we  
ever wanted: a little darkness to climb out of.

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## After Hopper

*Nighthawks, 1942*

She says that everything is after Hopper.  
That posh hotel—you looked about to slap her,  
but never did. Sometimes she'd wait at night  
in her blue robe, face folded like the note  
you didn't leave crumpled in a coat pocket.  
Sometimes she'd stand in broad daylight, naked  
before an open window, flesh so pale  
and round and full it seemed about to pull  
a tide of ruttish men up from the street.  
But mostly it's the red dress. The cut straight,  
sleeveless, loose. And her mouth is only lipstick.  
She says you never even see her talk,  
but just about to talk, about to smile.  
She says that every moment is a jail;  
this diner is her prison of endless light,

the ceaseless hour always getting late—  
yet no one moves. Her cigarette remains  
unlit. The busboy doesn't lift his hands.  
You could write a thousand lines, she says,  
on all the things she never does or has.  
How she seems so sad she might have cried.  
How you only see her almost satisfied.

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