

James Croal Jackson

Teenage Afternoons

wasted time the sloppy in and out
of direction from new strangers

begging for moans in the silence
of wind between the space of passing

cars and hours spent before this shield
from the bright yet lonely light

Soup Cup / Dead Life

This is microbiology.
What to do, what is not done

every day. Nature appears
without intervention.

Without invention, sing wings.
Flat cockatiels

flapping. Earth,
kiss your pain. Check

the bleeding. Allow
one bite.

Rural Restlessness

Now, when I am shackled in my mother's home
in the middle of the woods, with nothing to do

but write & fuck & consume, especially the day
after Thanksgiving, when not frigid enough to stay

inside forever but it *is* frigid, I want to roam
what seems the unattainable world, missing

the skyscrapers I hate & the open seasons over
Pittsburgh & the rows of rowdy bars I get wild in.

I want to drive my Ford Fiesta up the hill in shadow
& never come back down, accelerate to a hundred

and become the blur of pines, windows
down, forest mornings so thick with unease

I want to be shackled by trees & serve
the unattainable world the oxygen it lacks.

Reform

Turn away from bleeding nights
of hedonism, for nothing good

is heavenward, nothing virtuous
earthbound in the hours when

locals have vanished from taverns.
Nothing fills the soul more

than a bottomless glass of brew.
Nothing fills the soul anymore.

Cigarette fog creeps through
frigid city nights– how to swell

your lungs with want. Would-
be ghosts of unborn whispers,

these streets are teeming– how
ever empty they may seem.

Flake

you say you'll be there
always
but never show

the forecast calls
for meteor showers
so I lay a blanket

in the park
clouds obscure
the view

I guess tiny streaks
across the sky
are not magnificent

I throw a penny
into a wishing
well

and call a séance
for my father
in my dining room

the dead
don't leave
me

promises
on my voice
mail

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I am a clicking sound in the tongue of the restaurant—
how would you like to be served how may I serve you
the bones are getting cold in this chicken breast this cutlet
of space I said I'd do anything for cash and it's true there is
no limit to greed that's the whole idea space expands
and my atoms stay quantum and still, considering.

College Freshman

partying was the new
beginning growing up how birdlike
I rose from the ash of a suburb
to learn a new suburb how limiting
to be alive in a time of bubbles
floating in a happy blur
chemically unwell
days to pop

You Leave to Make Art in the South

humid
 green
 swamps
a riverflow
of talent
the sediment
 of the world
 gone well
 past
 my flaws
 I wish
 still for contact
 this accident of
 longing a lesson
in how not to be alone
 through the lens
 of canvas

About the Poet

James Croal Jackson (he/him) has a chapbook, *The Frayed Edge of Memory* (Writing Knights Press, 2017), and poems in *Pacifica*, *Reservoir*, and *Rattle*. He edits *The Mantle Poetry* (themantlepoetry.com). Currently, he works in the film industry in Pittsburgh, PA. (jimjakk.com).