

Miller Cabin Poetry Series

Henry Crawford

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YEARS LATER, FRANK O'HARA

I was only five
years old
and fifteen
miles away
when you
leaned against
the john door
at the
5 SPOT

so I came
to this poem
a little
too young
and a moment
too late

to do much
for her except
to listen
eyes closed
saying to myself
it's only
a song.

See an [interactive version](http://thebinaryplanet.com/) of this poem.

DRIVING BY A FARM AT A DISTANCE

A Pennsylvania farm knows
you're just driving through.
They see your rolled up windows
and let you go. I sometimes imagine
waking up to a table of butter and milk.
My imaginary wife adorned in gingham.
Outside, imagined animals are waiting
for me to imagine them too.
There might be pigs, but more likely
chickens. I imagine myself putting on
my farmer's suit to scatter some feed.
I believe there are machines that I imagine
need fixing. Heat of the day glistening
on my soaked bandana. My imaginary son
in the next field, all blond cowlick,
stooped over a row of young corn.
Maybe he's a Four-H Club hero
or a desk-bound nerd who wants none of this.
But there's always an imaginary dock.
Sometimes going out upon a useless pond.
Sometimes buried in the woods
by a dragonfly creek.

I am afraid of autumn.
It's then, I imagine, the evening
will appear to me. My plain wife
listening to the radio. Imagined music
in the farmhouse air. This is the night
I will stay on the dock. No one calling.
Lowering myself into the flotsam
of leaf dust and spent butterfly wings
to fall with the stars under the surface
of imaginary water.

Check [out the video](#) of this poem.

7 DISAPPEARING WORDS*

First to go were the [vulnerable] with little voice
and no [entitlement] to fairness. Next up
[diversity] was whited out in one clean stroke
along with [evidenced-based] as in “provable”,
or “true”. Words that made people feel uncomfortable
like [fetus] or threatened the powerful
like [science-based] had to be deleted. Without words
you can even make a people disappear
so on a plain gray desk, a blunt red pen crossed out
[transgender] and they were gone.

* The forbidden words are "vulnerable," "entitlement," "diversity," "transgender," "fetus," "evidence-based" and "science-based." See [Washington Post, December 15, 2017, CDC Gets List of Forbidden Words](http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2017/12/15/cdc-gets-list-of-forbidden-words/2017/12/15/).

THE FRUITS OF FAMINE

On those nights we traced
the shapes of fruit until the dark
became our eyes.

On those nights we left our fields
unhearing the crack of broken roots,
the silence of dying ground.

On those nights, twilight filled the deserts
of our crossing with the vermillion breath
of watermelon.

On those nights, the stars seeded the skies
above the camp. Jackfruit guards
stood still as celery stalks.

On those nights we dreamed like you
of strawberry days on porcelain plates.

On those nights I made an apple out of sand
and watched it blow away.

DRIVING ACROSS A BRIDGE

“our Nation has made great strides.”

Chief Justice, John Roberts, *Shelby County v. Holder*

for all the supposed wisdom
of [rivers] they offer no solutions
[licking the docksides] of cities
the open sores of [warehouse]
windows [the ragged] hoops of
vacant parks tagged and [slashed]
beside stone walls and forgotten
monuments of cement as I cross
the Whitestone bridge into Queens
wondering [who I'd be] on the
Edmond Pettus Bridge

mine is a tribe of immigrant
factory hands [raised] across
the Rikers Island narrows
[armored] in shot glass rings
[measuring ourselves] by
the hats and coats of others
[fearing what we do not have]
protected in the [normal] ways
the [family] ways the [generic]
ways the [muted] [necessary]
[every day] [ways] of hate

it's always 1965 on the Edmund
Pettus Bridge [some locking arms]
some wielding [billy clubs] some are
[praying] others firing [tear gas]
others [walking] some on horses
some will [roll up the windows]

lock the doors [look straight ahead]
[stay in their lane] as the bridge
arcs over a river of lost history
bleeding out of Selma

AFTER MIDNIGHT ON A ROAD OUTSIDE CASPER, WYOMING

Maggie is sleeping beside me
as highway lights spin a circus
wheel of [stars and signs]
along a valley of [real and
imagined] homes arranged
like circumstantial fortresses
along the plains of the gasoline
night

panoramic [backlit] towns
winging off the windshield
like galaxies moving away
in all directions as pings
and flashes of LEDs spark
the [incandescent dashboard]
with small bursts of information
only to recede back inside
the car [like luminous
creatures on the floor of
some undiscovered planetary
sea] or the final flares of a
distant civilization's lost war

there's a blue Kerouac light
radiating off the North Star
of a high mounted 7-11 sign
as the road takes [speed] and
[distance] to arrange the cars
in temporary partnerships
arriving and departing
[like anonymous lovers]
meeting up and moving on
in steady streams of [visible]

and [invisible light] at a fixed
speed no matter where we go
[or what] our circumstances
present [or the way we find
ourselves] or how we
happen to be

Maggie is dreaming of being
inside me [exploring] the ribbed
cities of my [fluid tubes] the
innumerable piano wires in the
thousand reaches of my limbs
[the neural connections] signaling
sensation along the cellular
cemeteries of my blanched skin
[my double-star partner] lighting
and darkening our always falling
surfaces like the intermittent
brilliance of an interstate moon
or the neon pulses of a 24-hour
“Welcome” sign

the Earth is a special house
[seething defiance] amid the
dead minutia of interstellar waste
barreling along on blind rubber
[obeying the same laws] as keeps
the car on the ground as lights
the way ahead as keeps the past
in the rearview mirror as thrusts us
out [onto the road ahead] moving
always further away

in our postcard motel Maggie
comes out of the bathroom in
a cloud of [shower steam] I’m

on the bed gazing at a painting
of a white clay cottage [inside
the cottage] a tollhouse keeper
labors at a table [his wife has
a basket of bright red apples]
the husband looks up to take
one [as forest creatures] arrive
at the cottage from afar

TELEVISION IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

Side effects include dizziness, fatigue, upset stomach and nausea. Prolonged television watching may lead to weight gain, missing sleep, nervousness and a feeling of numbness. Television contains cable news. Don't watch cable news if you are disturbed by scenes of adult men and women shouting at each other. The viewing of television is not recommended for infants, adolescents, young adults, the middle aged or elderly. Among the side effects of television is binge watching. Chronic binge watching has been known to occur in otherwise healthy individuals. In cases of binge watching do not attempt to quit watching without the supervision or consent of a spouse. See your doctor if you experience an inability to let go of the remote. Don't watch television if you are allergic to conspicuous consumption. Don't watch television if the you are unable to tolerate prolonged periods of mediocrity. Alternatives to television include taking a walk, meeting up with friends, jogging, watching the sunset, counting the stars at night and if all else fails, just turn it off and come to the Miller Cabin Poetry Series.

MAKING AN AUTO INSURANCE CLAIM

[my side view mirror] [got wacked] [by an unknown] [driver] [so I called] [an 800 number] [to make] [a claim] [and I was put] [on hold] [listening to a song] [with a strange] [xylophone] [solo] [and they broke in] [every three minutes] [to thank me] [for my patience] [I don't play] [the xylophone] [but I was in] [a band] [called] [Curb Your Dog] [with a drummer] [called] [Nuttty Chuck] [he knew] [three notes] [on the xylophone] [C] [C#] [and D] [he could play them] [fast] or [slow] [but we had to] [kick him out] [so Nutty Chuck] [and a guy named Horse] [moved] [to California] [with the xylophone] [and around] [this time] [the phone] [was asking] [if I would like] [to take] [a survey] [at the completion] [of the call] [after which] [the song] [with the xylophone] [came back]

[there's always] [a tendency] [to account] [for things] [my aunt Grace] [who was not] [my real aunt] [learned to play] [the flute] [at the age] [of 98] [I remember] [asking her] [about] [my mother] [as she talked] [she would toot] [a note] [or two] [she told] [my mother] [toot toot] [my dad] [would never] [toot toot] [leave his wife] [so all] [the children] [toot] [toot] [toot] [would be] [illegitimate] [toot] [toot] [my mother] [almost took] [her own life] [toot] [when she learned] [she was pregnant] [with me] [toot] [toot] [Grace said] [I should be] [grateful] [they didn't have] [abortion] [in those days] [I tooted back] [I'd be good] [either way] [toot] [to you] [and now] [the phone] [began] [asking questions] [I gave a 7] [to the service rep] [I gave 0] [for the time] [on hold] [I gave my mom] [an 8] [I gave myself a 9] [for being patient] [and 10 for the song] [with the] [xylophone] [solo]

OH, COLUMBIA!

*What shall I say, brave Admiral –
Joaquin Miller, Columbus*

your [coliseum streets] your lofty Uber clogged
traffic circles your [gaggle] of lunchtime lobbyists
[doubling down] on K Street haunches [consorting]
and [reporting] Big Jim [the old man of the firm]
holding forth [counseling] his partners ["Sail on!"]
["Sail on!"] in seas of flying fish at Metro Center
just up from the spawning grounds of Bethesda
while the president [still in his underwear] at noon
[looks over the roofs] of tourist shops [the march
of middle school penguins] across Constitution
and Independence keeping their [young punk's eyes]
on the shiny shoes of Cleveland Park interns
[Banana Republic] millennials catching lunchtime
rays ["Sail on!"] ["Sail on!"] in the minutes of meetings
[printing] and [reprinting] [tweeting] and [re-tweeting]
learning to read the lips of [tireless smiles] of kitchen coups
of [unseen knives] even the leather faced beggars
of Gallery Place look away in pity [as white skinned]
police cars sweep up the crumbs along the Francophile
squares [of pigeon coated generals] shouting
from their leaden horses ["Sail on!"] ["Sail on!"]
up the crooked stairs of the Hotel Washington
to watch [Gandhi] directing traffic on Mass Ave
before going on break at the [Phillips] to walk
into the last remains of [wood] up oil fragrant stairs
varnished in a wiser time [to lunch] with Caillebotte
and Renoir to whisper to yourself the only words
a city can ever say [Sail on!] [Sail on!]

THE LOVE POEM OF AN AVERAGE MAN

for Gertrude Stein

a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is
handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily
made a large box is handily made take my nail bitten hands a large box is handily made a large
box is handily made a large box is handily made my oil stained shirt a large box is handily made
a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large my steel toe shoes box is handily
made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large
box is handily made a large box is handily made no song is sad a large box is handily made a
large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is let's step out handily made a
large box is handily made no song is sad a large box is handily made a large box is onto ground
handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily
made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large
that is not you box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a
large box is that is not me handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made
a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is
handily made no song is sad a in your cloth coat large box is handily made a large box is handily
made a large box is handily made a large plain shirt box is handily made a large box is handily
made a large box is handily made a large box is handily and flats made a large box is handily
made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large
box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is
handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily pretend your beauty made a large
box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a as a gun pretends
large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is
its aim handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is
handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily
made a this is the tumble large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is
handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily
made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large box is handily made a large
box is handily made a large

no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window
is useless no window this is the end of fortune is useless no window is useless no window is
useless no window is useless no throwing off our gold window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless bailing out no window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no a drowning boat window is useless no window is
useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window I need to
know is useless no window is useless no window is the window useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window
is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is of your weeping useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless the thin glass
no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window
is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless
I need to know no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is
useless your jewel box closed no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no for good window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window
is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless
no window is useless no window there was a wood floor is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless raining
outside no window is useless no window is useless no window I want to sit with you there is
useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless
no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window and be honest is
useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless
no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no
window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window is useless no window
is usef

no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of
silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion
of silence no suggestion of is there anything silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of
silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion in the attic of silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence
no suggestion of silence no suggestion of is there anything silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion that can be had of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence
no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of a gray lock falling silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion don't push
it back of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of help me
gather my lost silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence
toy soldiers no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence
no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of
silence no I want to show you my night suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion with its sorrowful smile of silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence
no suggestion of silence no suggestion peering over the kitchen stove of silence no suggestion of
silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence in the blue of a losing flame no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence
no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion we've seen too many afternoons
of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion to fall for yet another of
silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion
of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no
suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no suggestion of silence no sugges

blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed **this is the tumble** blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and **there are no more rocks** resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized **to hold onto** and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized **the answers have been written down** and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and **forgotten** and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized **there is something in nothing** and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized **it is possible** and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed **to be someone** and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried **it is possible** and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and **for us** betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and betrothed and resumed blind and weak and organized and worried and