

Isolation and the Image

William Durham

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Linda Bierds

Richard Kenney

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William Durham

University of Washington

Abstract

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William Durham

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Linda Bierds
English

The purpose of the essay is to try to understand description's hand in the point of poetry. From various means films, novels, 19th century picturesque painting, etc., description isolates and primes the attention of the reader. The essay deals with the deep image in attempting to visualize what is behind poetry; that is what specific structures are built when we describe, and how to understand that mold creation.

Isolation and the Image

When we think about privacy, what do we think of? Short moments in the changing room of a department store, getting into your car in a crowded parking lot and letting out a deep sigh. Being alone at home is extraordinarily private. These are forms of physical isolation that grant us privacy from being seen. In these moments we are living an unstaged life. James Tate's poem "City at Night" touts the lines "Down that street an uproar is dwindling, / a small world had been magnified and was / shrinking back to its reasonable size" (4-6). Privacy, private lives, moments of deliberate seclusion or isolation are small worlds magnified. Conversely, when these worlds are magnified, the public, active, community-based life "shrinks back," like Superman and Clark Kent, two figures never seen in the same shot. Poetry gorges itself with renditions of private moments.

In Tony Hoagland's "Romantic Moment," the private moment is between two lovers and is brought to life again and again, like a child flipping a closet light on and off. "If she were a female walkingstick bug she might / insert her hypodermic proboscis delicately into my neck" (11,12) With every reimagining, the poem thrusts us into a different species' rendition of a date sitting on a rock. In the world of the poem, they are the only two humans alive on this planet. There are no politics; there are no wars; there are no skeletons in the closet, and there are no families. In the world of this poem, there exist only lovers. Only bull penguins vomiting softly into their lover's mouths populate the parks. I use this poem because it has multiple "bubbles" of privacy/isolation necessary for me to be able to bring up all of my planned examples in the future. So many of future examples are immensely small parts of larger wholes, they're moments within days. "Romantic Moment" fit this idea for me. The same scenario over and over recolors and recontextualizes our vision. That is, the very act of describing something isolates it from the

rest of the setting. Description, etymologically, is “de- *down* + scribere- *write*.” However “scribere” comes from the proto-Indo-European “to cut.” Description is cutting an image out of the setting to put it in clear view. Modern cameras do this, they cut rectangles of the world and completely forget the rest. When Hoagland only describes lovers on a rock, that is all we can see. We may infer a kind of courting, reaching for the check at the same time, awkward laughter, a chance meeting, but in describing only lovers, Hoagland's world dissolves into a world where only lips and vomit and chimpanzees smashing the plaza jewelry store windows exist. The world becomes a muted self-same haze outside of the myriad lovers.

In poetry, we are often privy to this environmental haziness. Fiction writers are allowed to be as spare or as verbose as they wish, and so in poetry, there are writers who take their time describing night longer than others, but syllables are a commodity for poets in ways fiction writers need not worry. In poetry, this act of world-building takes place in fractions, halves and quarters; a chair leg, a half-eaten banana, indistinct chatter outside—all colors the looking-glass of the poem. A poem's camera eye is highly focused, picking out parts to stand for the whole, synecdoche we call that. A few questions might be, if we take an image and isolate a subject, what happens to the subject? We've elevated something, made it more important than the rest of the scene. In Elizabeth Bishop's “The Fish,” the poem focuses intensely on the image of the fish, detailing the mouth and the ancient wallpaper scales. We know there must be a boat involved, and we do get “boat” and we know there must be water, so get “water.” The fish becomes so important the boat and water are completely unnecessary to look at. Of course this changes how we view the fish and the poem as a whole. The fish isn't described by its relationship to the water, the fish has a relationship to surviving, to living and never yielding. In fact the scarce mention of the water points toward a focus solely in the body of the fish, the aching jaw, the

medals with their ribbons in his mouth. The people with Elizabeth, if there were any, evaporate, and the water from where the fish was pulled doesn't get any page time. The water doesn't matter, the fish came from the water, but the water isn't what's important. The fish has scales that cut and a jaw that has bitten so much and has been all but destroyed, this cyborg fish lives and lives, despite tragedy after tragedy. All we know are boat, water, fish, and that's all we need to know. John Keats knew this. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." All we need to know is the fish, the rest will follow.

Norman Bates gives Marion Crane the key to her room, and she is alone again. She has been driving all day, has come to this motel off the main road, is the only patron of Norman, the man running the front desk. He gives her room number one, and moments after she goes into her room, and undresses to prepare for a shower. As she undresses, Norman removes a painting from the wall in his office, leaving bare a hole that is just big enough for a single eye to peer through. Norman watches Marion undress, and at this moment he is the picture of a voyeur, someone watching someone else, unseen. He is looking in on a private moment. Marion is alone in her motel, she has no reason to suspect she is being spied on and is undressing which only increases her desire for privacy. It is for these reasons that Norman's action represents a schism between public and private life; his looking renders Marion's actions to be performative, where the wall that separates them becomes the fourth wall, and neither party can interact with the other. Marion doesn't recognize that the wall that separates her and Norman is effectively the audience. Of course, Norman's intentions are volatile, and so we view his watching as disgusting. His voyeurism is a disruption; it makes him seem unhinged, plotting, dangerous.

On the other hand, take C.P. Cavafy's poem "Pictured." An artist, discouraged by how slowly their work is progressing, happens upon a boy resting beside a spring.

"I now gaze at a handsome boy
who is lying down close to a spring,
maybe exhausted from running.
What a handsome boy; what a heavenly noon
has caught him up in sleep.
I sit and gaze like this for a long time,
recovering through art from the effort of making it." (6-12)

We have a scenario that mirrors *Psycho*'s. A watcher or voyeur, and the unaware subject. A transformation takes place when Norman watches Marion and when Cavafy's speaker watches the handsome boy. Marion isn't speaking; you see her pause as she closes her robe, her back to us, and as she walks over to attend to something on the other side of the room. At this moment Marion is decontextualized, as the handsome boy is decontextualized. We don't think of Cavafy's speaker as being malicious or disgusting, as we view Norman, in fact, it is a life-affirming image. The speaker is rejuvenated, "recovering through art," the speaker says, "through the effort of creating it." Creating the boy? Cavafy did write the image into our minds, but he doesn't just rejuvenate from poetic proximity to the snoozing boy. He recovers through the act of watching the him, admiring the light of day on the boy's sleeping face. The speaker recovers from the gaze itself, from the act of watching.

If we only look at the boy as an image, the picture and the experience are flattened. It becomes 2D, static. Even if the wind breaks the branches' stillness and the grass murmurs across the meadow to the bank of the spring, the image exists in a corked bottle. Cavafy creates an

image that is two-fold: the sleeping boy by the spring, the speaker gazing on the boy, and us, the readers, playing the part of voyeur two times over. Not only do we observe the boy, but we observe the observation of the boy. Watching the boy is the hook of the poem altogether. The distance created at that moment is like that of one-way glass. A detective interrogates a suspect; the detective's colleagues watch as he stares down the perp.

The reader is Norman, looking through the hole in the wall, the poem, and seeing the images isolated from the rest of the world. The audience's sight is limited, we can only see what the poem gives us, we aren't allowed to move freely, we're just watching the action. Description isolates the subject, and then the subject becomes all we see, it colors our vision entirely.

Cavafy and *Psycho* are windows. Through both we can see a few things: first, the disconnect between a subject and a perceiver. Second, this disconnect allows for reflection, rather than reaction. Cavafy's speaker doesn't see a sleeping boy, he sees youth incarnate. Norman Bates sees a totem of the outside world, someone who represents so much of what he desires to see in himself. Agency abounds. We use these events to talk about gazes. Gazes were interesting because the audience is removed from directly watching the subject. You see someone behold something else beyond what is seen. A cup isn't relegated to cupdom if it's the subject. We see Norman watching Marion, we read Cavafy's speaker watching the boy, and we see what they see, but everything we perceive is colored by the person doing the watching. Like Murray says in *White Noise*, "it colors our vision." That's just a physical act of description, it's forcing you to see/feel/experience without having to say specifically what you should be seeing/feeling/experiencing. Cavafy says it's a handsome boy, a heavenly noon, but all of that falls flat unless we know that the speaker is literally recharged after watching the boy. It's not the image itself, but the kind of Saturn ring of images and connotations circling the subject that is so

important. If the subject didn't have gravity, if it weren't a planet or a star, nothing would orbit. An asteroid would keep streaking by, nothing would be affected if the subject was just a cup.

Let's take this idea of gravity a step further. It isn't, "look at those objects by this object." This kind of phrasing sounds like a thing you might learn in an introduction to a foreign language course. You don't look at the people around a building and say there are the people, there is the building; in fact, they become one in the same. The people around the cafe, sitting around small tables, their legs crossed, white cups near their resting hands; they are enforced by the object they surround, and vice versa. We see the people engaged with each other and with their surroundings as in Tom Robbins' piece, "The Eight Story Kiss," a piece for National Geographic Traveler where Robbins waxes manically, frantic-faced as he describes the Don CeSar Resort Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida. The building becomes more than it is, more than any building is. It becomes a spiritual totem, a body which the color pink clothes and makes fantastic. The building embodies a leisurely kick; it becomes more and more like a black hole that only attracts pink objects and pink framed images and metaphor. The totem acts as a bridge to contagious magic. Contagious magic, or infectious magic, is magic that transfers power by touch or proximity. Wearing a cursed jacket will transfer the curse to the wearer. In our usage of contagious magic, the subject of description infects its surrounding with itself. Imbues its power to things around it.

The subject becomes a magnet for specific images that complement and continue the power of the image. The power of the image being the reason our eyes are drawn to them. Cavafy's sleeping boy a charm of youth. In "The Eight Story Kiss," those traits are the color pink which is a personification of aloofness and serious independence bordering on lethal intention. The Don CeSar resort hotel becomes not just a



hotel, nor even a resort, but instead an eight-story flamingo, a massive temple to the chromatic power of the ubiquitous Florida Pink. Benjamin Moore, the paint company, has a color titled “Florida Pink,” It is part of their Classic Colors collection of “inspired hues that consumers and professionals have enjoyed for years.” The color itself, even without Robbins’ huge image bouquet, is a color that instantly references a cultural history. Florida Pink is akin to the image of Cavafy’s boy sleeping beside the spring and Hitchcock’s moment of the woman undressing; they are not unique images. They are kinds of image archetypes. Cavafy’s archetypal image is one signaling summer, youth, and the distance of longing. In the 1993 movie *The Sandlot* the gang goes to the pool not only to swim but to gaze at the lifeguard, Wendy Peffercorn. Much like Cavafy’s boy, Wendy represents an untouchable totem of rejuvenation. It’s the act of looking that the boys go to the pool to do. This is reinforced in the age-old trope that baseball players can’t swim. Wendy wears sunglasses that act as a double for Cavafy’s boy’s closed eyes. Her lifeguard tower enforces the distance in Cavafy’s poem; she is at this moment, Tom Robbins’ eight-story kiss; she even has red lipstick to complement her swimsuit.

In John Carpenter’s *Halloween*, main character Laurie’s friend Lynda is in bed waiting for her boyfriend, Bob, to come back upstairs. She’s in bed, naked under the covers and instead of Bob returning, it’s Michael Meyers, the movie’s hulking killer. The scene is tense not because Lynda dies, but because Meyers is under a white sheet, and Lynda assumes Bob is playing a trick on her. Lynda has nowhere to run. She is undressed, tangled in covers, and worst of all, she believes she is completely safe. This moment in *Halloween* mirrors *Psycho*’s voyeur scene in that Marion



Crane believes she is alone, or otherwise not in the presence of anyone she wouldn't want to see her undress. *Halloween's* Lynda is also in this position; she believes she is talking to her lover, not to a mental hospital escapee. The spheres of the public and private here are exciting because Meyers can look at Lynda in plain sight, he isn't across the street in a bush, not lurking in the darkness. The moment before Meyers reveals himself, Lynda believes she is seeing someone she knows, and so remains, in her mind, in the private sphere. From Michael's perspective, however, she is found, unprotected. The sheet that covers him serves the same purpose as Norman Bates' wall. For this moment, the public and private intermingle; Lynda mirrors Marion, her actions become performative as if she were reading lines with someone who doesn't have a copy of the script.

If description isolates, and if the ultimate isolation is represented by a solitary image, a radiant node, does the act of attracting other images “magnetically” result in less isolation? Any image that is elevated, say Wendy, is not made more or less isolated by the attraction of satellite images. Her magnetism as a totem is what creates the attraction in the first place. Saturn is technically less alone with its rings, but because they are in service of the planet as a whole, Saturn is not crowded out, nor are the rings seen as equal to the planet.

Each of these moments—Lynda both seeing and not seeing Michael under the sheet; the gang in *The Sandlot* going to the pool to see Wendy on her pedestal; Cavafy becoming recharged at beholding the boy; Marion being watched by Norman through the wall—they are all isolated events. None of the characters in any of the pieces have any knowledge of their subject's previous actions. Lynda had never seen Michael Meyers before, the sandlot boys had only seen Wendy in passing once in the course of the movie, Norman had no prior knowledge of Marion before she showed up at the motel, etc. I make this distinction to only pose questions about it.

This breakage between what characters know is also fragmentary. Perhaps every interaction in the world is like this, isolated, only to be contextualized by the events surrounding it. I think it has to do with the totem. I'm using totem in the sense of a kind of charm, a thing that is given magical properties. The subject is elevated as a result of being made a charm. Think regarding Wallace Stevens' poem "The Man on the Dump," where the dump becomes at once almost so many things. "The dump is full / of images." (3-4) Call the dump the world. The hazy other landscape we talked about with Tony Hoagland. The images of lovers are the moments, the isolated bubbles, the totems of elevated status. It is here that Stevens' attempts to make sense of the fragments. Like looking at what is attracted to the dump, Stevens' is trying to find a meaning in the subject of the dump. Why is it elevated? What purpose? What good does it do?

...Is it peace,

Is it a philosopher's honeymoon, one finds

On the dump? Is it to sit among mattresses of the dead,

Bottles, pots, shoes and grass and murmur aptest eve:

Is it to hear the blatter of grackles and say

Invisible priest; is it to eject, to pull

The day to pieces and cry stanza my stone?

Where was it one first heard of the truth? The the. (41-48)

The dump is a holding place for the isolated moments to occur. The dump is mirrored in the Bates Motel, the swimming pool in "The Sandlot," the spring Cavafy's boy sleeps beside. The

dump would be the water trough and area beside the house where the poem "The Snake" by D.H. Lawrence is set. The dump is a detritus farm, a kind of knick-knack antique roadside attraction that might also hold the key to the world. Specific objects are heightened, time itself passes "like papers from a press." What follows is a series of containers: "the bouquets come here in the papers," "the wrapper on the can of pears, / The cat in the paper-bag, the corset, the box / From Esthonia: the tiger chest, for tea. " (5-9). The dump



becomes a place for totems to be made prominent, for everyday objects to gain an elevated status. Among the trash of the dump, what ordinary object doesn't become fantastic? An elaboration: In the 1824 picturesque painting by John Constable titled *A Windmill Near Brighton*, there are red flowers represented by red spots that line a small hill that obscures the bottom half of a windmill. Consider the hill, hairy with dull brown grass, to be Stevens' dump. The bouquets that arrive in the papers of the day are the red flowers. For a painting with a nearly monochromatic scheme, the red calls attention to itself and draws a diagonal line for your eyes to follow up the crown of the mound. The line of red leads your eyes up to the center of the windmill's arms, which there is yet another spot of red. A trail of bouquets leading you to a point just off center. This point, for Wallace Stevens' poem, is the final line. "Where was it one first heard of the truth? The the." "The the" is the center of the windmill's arms. "The the" is each separate dying ember that wrought its ghost upon Edgar Allan Poe's floor. "The the" is the idea

of the totem, an unnamable piece of the truth, or a thing that leads us to a slice of it. Description isolates and refines. When we describe an image, we ink its edges, and the landscape fills in around it. Norman makes Marion into a totem, he wants her to be able to stay, but his mother forbids it. For Norman, Marion is a hopeful someone from the outside world. For the boys in *The Sandlot*, Wendy is a human charm, a billboard of love; they project their fantasies onto her image. “The the” is an important part to mention because of the idea of the charm/totem. “The the” is the truth, a first pinning down of something separate from everything else. It’s not “A a.” “A” denotes that the subject is only one of many. “The” separates, excludes everything but itself. It’s the heart of description. The lovers. The girl. The murderer.

In Don DeLillo's Novel, "White Noise," there is a famous scene where Jack Gladney, Hitler scholar, and Murray Siskind, Elvis scholar, visit "the most photographed barn in America." All around are people taking pictures of the barn, all around there are signs with fat letters "MOST PHOTOGRAPHED BARN IN AMERICA," and the two characters for this brief scene, watch the onlookers looking. Murray makes a big deal of the phenomenon, saying "no one sees the barn." The barn is not the point, "we're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one." The only reason anyone has come to this barn is to take its photo, to have visited a trivial monument that exists in perpetuity as long as it's photographed. That is, if its image is recreated endlessly. The point of this scene isn't to see the barn, but to be able to step outside of our 1:1 way of meaning-making. The scene is painted in such a way that Jack and Murray are removed from the experience of the barn. The entire scene comments on the looking of the tourists. Murray comments "we've agreed to be part of a collective perception. This literally colors our vision. A religious experience in a way, like all tourism" (DeLillo p. 12). Just like the sandlot boys project their fantasies of love onto Wendy Peffercorn, the barn becomes a

projection screen onto which the professors map society. The barn becomes the vehicle So does Marion for Norman. We don't see Marion in her and Norman's scene; we see someone who is being seen without knowing it. We see someone who is in danger but does not know it. "What was the barn like before it was photographed? What did it look like, how was it different from other barns, how was it similar? We can't answer these questions because we've read the signs, seen the people snapping pictures. We can't get outside the aura. We're part of the aura" (DeLillo p. 13). We cannot see the boy Cavafy sees without Cavafy's speaker's vision on top of ours, "this literally colors our vision." Vision coloring vision. This is yet another metaphor for the isolating

element of description. The idea is not that through description you push other images out, but that through description, as through a fine mesh filter, you only allow certain sediment to be visible. "They don't see the barn," Murray says. Cavafy doesn't see the boy. Norman doesn't see Marion. The



sandlot kids don't see Wendy. They see a projection of the image, a representation. The metaphor becomes a totem, a raised glass that becomes the center of attention before a toast. "I have the power of the elevated subject," silence falls, eyes are raised, and then the toast begins. The idea of *The Golden Bough's* contagious magic rings here. For a more physical example, think about "Katamari Damacy." A 2004 Playstation 2 video game released by Namco. The premise is this: You begin as a small geometric alien and you roll an object until you run into another object. Each object sticks to the next, imitating how you might make a snowman body.

The object ball gets larger and larger, eventually until you're rolling up entire cities. *The Golden Bough's* contagious magic works similarly. "The other great branch of sympathetic magic, which I have called Contagious Magic, proceeds upon the notion that things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards," as in an irreversible manner of seeing. They don't see the barn, and they never will, just as professor Murray said. We've seen the signs, the markers. These are the associated image families of the poem. The spring the boy lies beside, the heavenly noon that falls on his face. They accompany the chief image of the boy, and reinforce its power. Wendy Peffercorn may be a sight to behold outside of the lifeguard role, but thinking in terms of Katamari, everything in her immediate vicinity is centered on her. The landscape serves to raise her image as the raised glass. The toast is the underlying message, the connotation. The boys swoon at Wendy, projecting their fantasies.

In John David Clark's poem "The Past as a Public Swimming Pool," the gaze of description stretches the past out backward, the past becomes the barn upon which we project. "The lifeguard is ever nineteen and pretty / in a bathing suit red as tomatoes" (1,2). One can easily make a connection to "The Sandlot" here. The final lines of the poem rely on an image that is twofold: "Now and always would-be caryatids / wait their chance to briefly pose / between the spring board and the sky" (18-20). Once at the height of the jump, the jumper reaches out their arms and stretches their legs as if Atlas holding up the world with renewed strength. They are statues of youth, unending as the ever-young lifeguard. The barn that can never be seen with new eyes, the immortal caryatid of the jumper, they are all the projected upon totems: immortalized, elevated. The jumpers are also viewed as caryatids by those watching from the pool, by the "almost audible sizzle / of high school girls tanning" (12,13). A kind of double image, double viewing happens at this moment. The bodies in the air are at once brief and unending, past and

immortal simultaneously. Heads move upward to see the pause before the jumper falls. Heads move up as if to listen to a speech prompted by a raised glass, a petite monument. We raise a glass to celebrate X, we are going to name it: here.

A world of love, a summer that is always humming. The body always in mid-air. Reminiscent of the Mark Strand poem, "Provisional Eternity,"

"A man and a woman lay in bed. "Just one more time," said the man, "just one more time." "Why do you keep saying that?" said the woman. "Because I never want it to end," said the man. "What don't you want to end?" said the woman. "This," said the man, "this never wanting it to end.""

This, this specific unending vision. Poems are bubbles. They are worlds set apart. Demarcated and sectioned off. The man doesn't want this to end, this staring at Wendy Peffercorn, this heavenly noon that falls upon the handsome boy in Cavafy's eye. Even the jagged line breaks of a poem give the hint of a fragment of tapestry torn from a larger piece, a sliver of a Mappa Mundi. These tears are the honest fragment murmurings of a poem. These fragments instruct us to look beyond the edges of a poem, to peer over the edge of the cliff. A poem wants you to look over its edges, to peer into suggested territory. When we dream we are confronted with fragment after fragment. We aren't in a full world at all, only suggestions of worlds, flashing colors, faces you've seen on the street. Suggestions of life we take as real life.

A recent article on the New York Times titled "New Zealand Disappears from World Maps" details fairly quickly that New Zealand keeps getting left off world maps. If we think of a poem like a lost country, it begins to take on an associative life of its own. A poem has pipes. This associative spreading pushes us toward the "they don't see the barn" sentiment. In some ways, a poem about a lost country is a poem about a lost country. In others, the lost country is a

vehicle for a larger, even more vast and far-reaching idea. What *is* a country? The idea of the country is suddenly an actor upon a stage where a Papier-mâché arch is symbolic of a grand entrance to a royal garden. Mary Ruefle talks about the idea of thing meaning greater thing in her book of essays *Madness Rack and Honey*, in an essay titled “Theme.”

What is theme? Theme is, simply, a subject or topic—for our purposes, of discourse or artistic representation, including architecture and design. For instance, my theme is theme. But my *real* theme is poetry, though I not be mentioning it much. Because, since you are poets, I assume you think metaphorically. Isn’t that the way you read? True or false: the subject or topic of a poem is never really its subject or topic. Robert Frost never wrote a nature poem. He said that. Meaning: there’s more to me than trees and birds. Meaning: there’s more to trees and birds and I know that, so that means there’s more to me, too. (Ruefle)

So, the lost continent can be more than a lost continent. Wendy Peffercorn can mean more than Wendy, more than the stand she sits on, more than the pool Squints pretends to drown in. The barn is more than just a barn, these images carry with them worlds in their pockets, their clutched palms. This brings us to Robert Kelly’s deep image. Robert Bly talks about Robert Kelly’s term “the deep image” like this:

Let’s imagine a poem as if it were an animal. When animals run, they have considerable flowing rhythms. Also they have bodies. An image is simply a body where psychic energy is free to move around. Psychic energy can’t move well in a non-image statement. (180)

To use Bly's metaphor and expand it, as the deep image wants to do, think of the psychic energy of the animal being the poem. The poem moves about a forest, catching glimpses of life, death, fortune and fame, delinquency and rot. The deep image is the forest the poem lives within.

I am asserting that the deep image is not constricting and is in fact what allows poetry to have any form at all. Without the deep image, poems would exist as if on a planet without gravity, they would float up and out, having no center of balance, no concept of groundedness. It is also my assertion that the many facets of image described in the previous pages of this paper all cohere to the same overarching idea: description does as much constructing as it does sequestering. The idea that description isolates is absolutely clear, description allows for more specific detail to be given and in that specific detail lies Regina George (*Mean Girls* 2004) saying "you can't sit with us" to the myriad of now excluded descriptions. Descriptions lead to connotations, connotations lead to webs of association. Red. Red like blood, red like ribbons on presents, red like big barns, red like red hair, red like harvest moons, etc. Once the poet gives more concise description, these ideas are restricted and more specific associations can occur. The deep image can also be called the super-image, or, the overarching mega-image of a piece of work. The super-image is a kind of God molecule when it comes to understanding.

Understanding the workings of the super-image opens doors and windows to understanding poems in a more holistic way. Take for example, what we've already taken as example, the scene of the kid jumping off the diving board in John David Clark's poem "The Past as a Public Swimming Pool." Just as we've seen before, "Now and always would-be caryatids / wait their chance to briefly pose / between the spring board and the sky" (18-20) the jumpers are described as caryatids, the Greek statues holding the holding the sky and the Earth apart. Boundary-keepers, the children become. The swimming pool as a metaphor contributes

massive amount of psychic data to the poem before the poem even arrives. A fountain of youth where children would meet in the summer when they had no school, no obligations, where the dress code was “less”, and sweets were sold and good sandwiches too. The cool water keeping the hot sun at bay. Before we enter the poem at all, the super-image of the poem places us in a certain psychic state. By psychic state I mean that as readers we have a certain set of expectations for what we are about to read. We expect water, youth, summer, freedom, etc. We could go on and on like this, listing possible routes for our minds to travel. In other words, to use Robert Bly’s metaphor again, the psychic energy of the poem is an animal, moving willingly through the lines. The deep image resonates through the poem, can be seen in the ruffles of the poem’s moves. The whole of the poem and beyond the whole. The connotations, the associative leaps, all of these make up the deep image where the animal lives, the soul of the animal. If the animal thrives on X, the deep image provides. It is the biome in which the animal knows the world. This biome not only molds the poem’s psychic energy, it reflects the energy, mirrors it.

The super-image, or king-image, mega-image, etc. (different manners of thinking about the same thing) intends to create a frame within which the larger idea of any poem or set of ideas becomes clearer. A short essay by Marina Keegan, titled “The Opposite of Loneliness” begins “We don’t have a word for the opposite of loneliness, but if we did, I could say that’s what I want in life.” The essay continues for about two pages and is a commencement address for the students of Yale university, year 2012. The way in which the essay attempts to describe a feeling that has no definition does precisely what I believe the super-image accomplishes. Take for example this paragraph:

It's not quite love and it's not quite community; it's just this feeling that there are people, an abundance of people, who are in this together. Who are on your team. When the check is paid and you stay at the table. When it's four a.m. and no one goes to bed. That night with the guitar. That night we can't remember. That time we did, we went, we saw, we laughed, we felt. The hats. (Keegan)

Just like points in an argumentative essay, each image, each description pushes a specific agenda. How can we define the opposite of loneliness? A dictionary might say "the state of not being alone," and leave it at that. How do we define what is so many things? Nostalgia, comfort, family, history, etc. "The Past as a Public Swimming Pool" reaches out from this essay and has a similar goal.

For the super-image to be possible, the author must be very particular in their descriptions, their images, their phrasing, so that readers not only follow the associative leaps, but begin to see the forest in the trees. The author says, "huge oak, wide branches, dark forgiving bark, here and here and here," and eventually the forest is alive around us as readers. We begin to understand why the swimming pool is used as metaphor for the past, for an infinite youth, golden.

Think back to Tony Hoagland's poem, "A Romantic Moment," where example after example of different courting rituals for different species of animal gave us an understanding of what the poem's intentions are. A larger picture beyond the humor of a monkey smashing glass, a frog tongue wrapped around a body, thrashed. But the physicality of love, attraction, the chaos of the animal world beside the quiet after-date of a pair of people. Homo Sapiens enjoying ice cream on a rock, thinking to themselves, nothing out of the blue. When you think of love, think

this. In the amalgam of images and descriptions, the energies of poems sprinting through thick forests of metaphor and meter, the psychic energies depend just as much on the deep image as the deep image depends on them to populate its forests and caves and gullies and valleys. The second stanza from Rowan Ricardo Phillips' poem "*Purgatorio*, XXVI: 135-148", "I'd lost my way. I'd had no guide but a light: / The slowly approaching twilight. And I said, 'Light be this world,' and I said, 'world this be light.'" The deep image calls back to its constituents and mirrors their wants and needs, their essences—the politician we always wanted. The world of light and the light that makes up the world, one in the same. For every glass of light fizzing in the cupboard while the parents are away, the child hears this humming world. The roots of poetry and the joy of description, the thing and the thing our bodies want it to be—they out to one another and pull us close.

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