

Benediction

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The stained windows, stuffed with canned light,
offer only a glassy salvation: frozen pictures,
flat with hope. I pray, fervently
(my knees awkward against the pew),
as only an atheist can. My eyes are shut tight,
my lips move painfully over jagged
slices of the Lord's Prayer, or perhaps,
the twenty-third psalm: echoes I pull
(successfully) from the black holes in my head.

Like a panicked squid I have sprayed ink
over my memories (I admit it) and
somehow God romps in the resulting shadow.
The tradition paints ghosts white.
But I know better. When he visits me he's a root
trailing dark puddles, or a cigarette
snubbed out in an ashtray. Mysterious, at best,
but I have learned to approach soot
with trepidation, dust with fear,
whatever my beliefs may be.

Here, at last, is the happy ending:
when I leave the church (for ritual bleeds to
boredom), my brow is wet. I wipe my forehead,
find my perspiration daylight,
transparent.