

So Be Violently New

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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of  
San Francisco State University  
In partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree

Master of Arts

In

English: Creative Writing

by

Jens Kevin Jimmy Mikkelsen

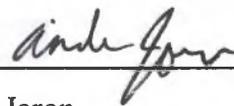
San Francisco, California

Fall 2018

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *So Be Violently New* by Jens Kevin Jimmy Mikkelsen, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in English: Creative Writing at San Francisco State University.



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Assistant Professor



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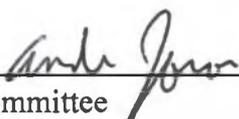
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So Be Violently New

Jens Kevin Jimmy Mikkelsen  
San Francisco, California  
2018

"So Be Violently New" attempts to use poetry to make an incision on the body of masculinity that exists in modern society, and to open up the insides, the gore, the hardships, and the parts of it that we don't want to see. At times, this project is difficult to look at, but it is visceral because it has to be. It is real because the problem is real, and the solution the biggest question.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Thesis Committee

12/12/18  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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For Brenton

I wish you were alive.

"A man does not die of love or his liver or even of old age; he dies of being a man."

—Miguel de Unamuno

RECOMMENDED



*A bipedal primate mammal (Homo sapiens) that is anatomically related to the great apes but distinguished especially by notable development of the brain with a resultant capacity for articulate speech and abstract reasoning, and is the sole living representative of the hominid family.* To consider what this means. A development of nature that has resulted in such brilliance, such intelligence surely cannot be a mistake. To consider the evolution of a creature as poignant. We are, at our best, destruction incarnate. Greed in the flesh. So self-righteous as to divide our own species into two unequal parts and play the role of God among those we consider lesser, the role of Judas alongside our equal kings. Crowns as helmets, we have twisted the metal of false power into something impenetrable, placed so violently on our heads and thrown so gently down to the floor of our thrones. We are without kingdoms in this world where everything around us is stronger than we anticipate, and we are, as we speak, being usurped. The best thing to ever happen to the world. Kings in cages, and were we ever meant to really understand what it is to lose that which we wrongfully claimed was ours? We decorated our castles with ornamental keys and gold vases, and forgot to put any mirrors around us. We never forgot to hang the mirrors but simply, we knew that even our own vanity was no match for the fear of our reflection. Our kingdom is burning under the light of an explosive moon and I am happy to watch from the center

of the chaos. This is a protest. To light oneself on fire, violence in victimless rage. I am happy to see my own reflection in the embers, and I can tell you that there is no more beautiful a sight than rebirth. Out of the ashes, smoke will rise. This kingdom is dead.

*What it Means to be a Man*

To be wise,  
hold light in hand  
and  
crush it.

To carve mouths  
into paintings  
and make them speak to you.

To mold clay  
into weapons,  
cleave carcass,  
skin creature and  
drain.

To butcher mirror  
with razor blades,  
and refuse reflection:  
become knife.

*Quietus*

To pretend  
that bones  
aren't glass  
and glass  
isn't sand.  
Bodies erected  
from deserts,  
we are marching  
and burning  
our feet  
to try and stay relevant.  
We are trying  
to pretend  
that the blisters  
aren't tokens  
and the horizon  
isn't empty.

Our bodies are  
empty.

Carcasses en masse  
like debris  
from an explosion,  
like we didn't disobey  
the fire marshal

and fill this room  
with flames.

I want to take  
these bodies,  
your bodies and  
mine,  
and crush them  
under my blistered feet.

I am tired.

There is no more room  
in my body  
for sleep or  
nourishment  
or poems.  
I have filled it with inferno,  
stolen the sparks  
from your residence  
and set this world on fire.

Poetry and bodies and  
everything we used to love  
now embers, now smoke  
in the turmoil.

*Seething*

We pour coffee in  
our American mouths  
at sunrise  
and work  
until it's gone again,  
no burning daylight,  
no wasting time.

Cigarettes with  
nothing to drink.  
I want to feel the  
ash on my tongue the  
spark in my mouth.  
Morning fossils,  
one at a time,  
until daybreak.

When morning comes  
we are ready in minutes  
with shirts on our backs  
and sweat on our brows.  
No makeup routines,  
just masks of strong men  
with strong hearts  
and strong beards  
and strong arms.

Strong-arm politics,  
strong-arm stares and  
light-hearted compliments.

It's locker room talk.  
Small dicks and  
groomed hair,  
platonic relationships,  
mothers.

It's the heavy breaths  
and stop sign expressions:  
don't disagree with me  
or turn the chair around  
and force me to sit in it.  
I am not ready to face  
the cowardice  
of my own existence,  
not ready to taste  
without ash on my tongue,  
without the confidence  
of something smoldering.

*Wrest*

## Kings

use the stars  
to lead them into  
rusting thrones.

I can only sit here  
and hope  
that my pen  
writes everything out  
the way I mean to say it,  
the way you  
need to hear it.  
My pen is hunting you.  
The ballpoint  
a semi-cocked  
rose petal  
at the end  
of my fingertips,  
flower stem  
in a loaded barrel.

*The Road Barricaded*

When I say  
the sky  
is falling,  
I mean that  
my hands  
broke through it,  
because I am  
in pain,  
jagged, sharp rock  
of eggshells  
on my feet and

I stained the way for you.

This is how it was  
always  
meant to be.

At some point,  
one of us  
had to admit  
that this isn't the way  
we intended to  
live,  
and if it is,  
I am sorry

for betraying you.  
I am sorry  
that I  
have to drive this  
into your skull  
to make sure you  
understand  
that we were not chosen,  
not exalted,  
not hailed,  
not programmed.

This was not meant to be.

We took bones  
and made weapons,  
fastened them to our hips  
and our eyes,  
forced these bodies  
to march and  
wither.

We stained the world  
with their own footprints  
and I think it's time  
for us to bleed now.

*Hush*

Brenton died  
with a smile  
on his lips and I  
fear  
I will not  
embrace death this way.

People wonder if  
the cigarettes  
have yellowed my teeth,  
but I hide the answer  
in my closed mouth,  
sealed as safes,  
rusting.

Crimson and orange  
petals dangling  
from my mouth  
and falling  
from my lip  
to my palm,  
to the grip  
of my fingers  
where I can  
bend and  
distort the frame  
of a key

into something more  
tangible, more capable  
of being swallowed.

WITH REGRET



An ambulance can represent hope. But sirens are wailing, loud, interrupting and 8% of ambulance delays are longer than 30 minutes. We never understand the truth of this until our arms are swinging violently at walls, doors, and antagonists. 30 minutes is long enough to lose yourself in the violence of misunderstanding. We close our minds like fists and expect that we can still grasp those tangible evidences with them, when the reality is that we are simply knocking them off of desks and tables, to the floor, to the loud crash of a broken vase or shattered knuckles. Can we take these injuries and mend them? Is our rage as hopeless as the victim who was forced to wait too long? If 30 minutes is adolescence, then yes, and it is too late. We are already bound by the force of our violence against objects. Objects that lose their value when they are broken. The truth moves from bone to cast and becomes irreparable without leaving seams along the outer membrane to remind us that this object was once broken, but still remains a part of us. And that is the truth which is most difficult to bare: that we are bound by our bodies and the trauma inflicted on them, a spiraling liability that misdirects us and leaves us in the state of a moving ambulance. We are loud, interrupting, wailing, we are inconsolable. This truth is a requiem, until that which has held us to our bodies is no longer tangible, and the grief becomes a salient moment of escape. Watching bodies take their lasts breaths, or realizing that they did so before the ambulance arrived, before the moment of "Time of Death." And it is in this moment that

our wounds become scars become tattoos become  
memorials. We cease to see the line between mourning and  
healing, and the loss becomes a blur that is forever difficult  
to interpret without flowers on graves or a constant fear of  
sirens.

*Elegy for Brenton*

You found out  
that I didn't make it  
in the kitchen,  
underneath yourself.

You promised  
to make loud apologies,  
found silence.

You put yourself in the ambulance,  
rested your hand  
on my forehead,  
screamed at God,  
cut open your chest  
and found emptiness.

You saw  
light  
in music,  
listened, hoping I  
had left you  
something.

You carried the weight  
to the roadside,  
fell to your knees

and bled.

You named everything  
after me:  
*pico de gallo*,  
cigarettes,  
headstones.

You wrote apologies  
in white spaces  
and left no room  
for anyone else  
to say goodbye.

You made one last  
promise:  
That we would be  
eighteen forever,  
forced to understand  
that this would always be  
half true.

You found  
my last words  
in a song,  
heard static,  
knew that this was  
real, there was

no going back.

You knew  
that I was finished here,  
sleeping the rest  
of your life away  
under your feet.

You repaired  
all of the broken  
parts of yourself,  
tried to build, to  
force metamorphosis  
to take over the empty space.

You heard static,  
knew that I  
wasn't listening,  
that you were  
the only piece  
left behind.

You became me,  
masterful at smiling  
and forgiving.

You buried yourself  
next to me,  
visited me  
when you needed to cry.

You left me flowers  
every December  
until the wilting  
and the begging  
no longer helped.

*Fracture*

When I say that  
masculinity  
killed my friend,  
what I mean is that  
I was raised  
to raise fists,  
take short breaths,  
hold cigarette lighters  
in closed hands.

I  
did not  
drive  
my car  
into  
him—  
send his body  
thirty feet from impact,  
collapsing skull,  
piercing lung.

When I say that  
I killed my friend,  
what I mean is  
I became  
the hard asphalt:

unmoving and  
unforgiving.

*Retrospect*

Noun.

A survey or  
~~review~~ regret  
 of a past course  
 of ~~events~~ tragedies  
 or period of [lost]  
 time.

Verb.

To take a cloth  
 and, in circles,  
 clean a ~~spot~~ stain  
 on the table.

~~Circular~~ Revolving  
 around this idea  
 and this time [lost] and  
 (I can) try  
 to ~~remove~~ extract  
 it  
 but it  
 is you.

*Voice**I*

There is a bird  
in the window  
and I  
want to choke it,  
break  
its neck,  
smear  
its blood  
on my cheeks,  
strip  
its throat  
of its song.

The bird  
was looking  
for reflection  
in the glare  
of my open window.

*II*

There is a bird  
lying on the sill  
and it is dying.

I want to—

There is a sound  
like choking,  
a sound  
like drowning, like  
there is too much  
blood  
in the throat  
as the bird  
tries to sing.

SHAKING

Right now, the most complex equation in this larger query is how to divide up and analyze the emotional intelligence of men. How do we take this complexity and divide it into pieces that will fit under the gaze of a microscope? I am using Manchester Orchestra's "Simple Math" as a reference point. The boy with his father, the deer head on the wall, first shot at a living creature. Compare this to the mending of a relationship when it's too late in life to realize how beautifully a son can appreciate his father, this moment. Compare this to the man years later who now, with his large beard and heavy figure sets his emotional intelligence on the table and cuts it open, soft voice and honesty. How do we, as men, consider this possibility? That, not only will we one day, hopefully, be able to reflect on our own boyhood and cry out songs, but that we have the capacity to save ourselves from the repression long before we grow hair on our chests. It is a matter of capability and emotional intelligence relevant to one question: can you look your father in the face and tell him you love him, that you forgive him, or you don't. That there is a lacuna the size of a great lake in his chest and you want to crawl onto his body and cover it with your boyish figure before he is too weak to carry you, and you too far gone into your own masculinity to admit that you wish he had never put you down as a child. Where in this grieving, in this notion of breaking ourselves down into pieces are we able to find those strong arms. We hold onto them for such a short amount of time until we grow into our own, and it is only

when those arms can be seen as the appendages of a real man that we realize that we can only ever hold ourselves now, hold our masculinity in our strong arms and bear it against our own lacunas. There is a mathematically unavoidable solution to this equation: that  $x$  will always remain unknown until we are ready to fill the emptiness with something tangible for our sons to hold onto, like the arms of a father that cannot be replaced by a song.

*Fragment**I*

A boy  
sees father's hand,  
feels  
the air  
brush his ear,  
hears the crack  
of drywall,  
the powder  
on his neck  
like blood splatter.  
He keeps his eyes  
closed, listens  
against the wall,  
follows the vibrations  
like a bat  
to his mother  
in the doorway,  
feels father's breath,  
smells beer,  
hears mother  
crying  
in the hall.

*II*

I remember this moment  
more than any of them.  
My mother in tears in the hallway.  
My siblings tucked safely in the closet.  
A moment suspended.  
Mother in the hallway.  
Siblings in the closet.  
Father's breath.

Cracked jaw,  
blood raining down  
to the floor  
from the lip,  
tooth suspended in the air  
like a pearl  
freed from the string  
of a necklace.

*Boy*

When he  
called you this,  
he did not mean  
*small child of mine,*  
he meant  
you are not  
tall enough  
to be called a man.  
You are too  
full of life,  
you haven't  
sacrificed  
unbroken windows  
for booze  
or smooth pavement  
for the cracks  
in the sidewalk  
that a boy,  
when he  
jumps over them,  
is hell-bent  
on saving his mother  
from a broken back,  
a cracked rib,  
a black eye,

a night  
full  
of hiding  
in closed spaces  
and quieting  
your children  
from their sobs  
just to keep  
their childhood  
intact.

One day  
you'll be  
tall enough.

*Vigilant**I*

What are the chances  
that my dad  
and my father-in-law  
share the same rage?

They carry their anger,  
display it proudly on t-shirts  
and stickers in car windows.

We cover our own skin  
with blankets of colored linens,  
we expect the sticker  
not to peel,  
not to tease  
the emptiness  
of that window.

We want the violence  
in the threads  
to speak for itself  
so we don't have to.

But my dad still punches holes in walls  
when he's drunk,

and my father-in-law curses at his wife  
when Netflix buffers.

*II*

I grew up a vice for someone else's rage,  
and yet I have been born and married  
and heaved into this:  
the red blood, the anger.

When I was 8 years old  
I began feeling the weight  
of fear  
take a heavy place on my chest.

I would bring sticks  
from the park  
and hide them under my bed.  
Anger in place of fear,  
fear fueled by anger:  
a concealed weapon  
weighing down my pocket.

*Lacuna*

I always imagined  
that if my father  
would sing to me,  
I would feel dust  
spew from his mouth,  
see shards of rock  
where his teeth should be.

His breath was always cold  
and suffocating,  
so I wore masks to bed  
to kiss him goodnight,  
to kiss my mother after.

*Security*

To REDACTED myself.  
Maintain structure of  
*familj*  
in all of those  
cherished traditions:  
be present with each other,  
continue to REDACTED.  
Never let him

REDACTED.

*Familj* means  
to be home,  
live with  
a sense of REDACTED.

Father walks tall  
along the corridor  
with his fingers  
dragging against the wall  
and you can hear them  
on the other side,  
feel their scratching  
make roadmaps  
of his presence and his

**REDACTED.**

Father says:

**REDACTED.**

You repeat this.

**"REDACTED."**

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

There is a phenomenon when you, as a man, walk in public and find that men make the implicit effort to make you feel as if they could walk through you. I find myself most fearful of the world when surrounded by these men. I find myself grieving over my own breath and trying not to make sounds like choking when they draw nearer. These men are, as I am, often unaware of their presence in the public space. We are gazers. We do not fear to look upon passersby and we certainly do not fear to notice when other men do the same. We are looking. We are threatening. We are making ourselves known to those around us and in this same manner we are making ourselves larger. Deimatic. Eyespots on our wings. Hair standing upright and sharp. Puffed chests. We are bluffing. This act of maintaining power is a distraction from our own fear: that the strangers who cross our paths might see us for what we really are. That they might sense our struggle, our emotion, our own fear. That they might extract a memory from our childhood that is still a gaping wound on our skull, still soft and full of exposed, spongy tissue. We are living in fear that we may one day be forced to see our own reflection standing bare in front of us if we do not make every attempt to disguise ourselves as men. To find solace in that mask. I want to carry this mask in my pocket.

*Anticipate*

The hair  
on my arms  
is straight and  
resting flat on my skin  
until I see a man  
on the sidewalk,  
same direction,  
slower pace.

Should I slow down  
or put the weight  
of my body  
forward  
in a dead sprint,  
like a hare  
at the sound of  
snapping twigs?

But I don't hear anything  
except the vibrations  
of my feet against  
the pavement  
and my breathing,  
heavier and heavier still.

There is man  
behind me,  
and I can smell the musk  
of his cigarette  
catching up to me.  
There is a man on  
the other side of the street  
keeping my pace,  
a man above me  
ready to dive  
onto his prey,  
a man behind me,  
a man below me,  
a man on top of me,  
and the hollow carcass  
of a man  
wrapped around my muscles,  
tensing, breathing,  
aching.

*Stranger*

Her arm sways  
over her head,  
hands gripping the fabric  
that swings from the rafter.

She sees my gaze  
as the iron sight  
of a fully loaded handgun.

To me,  
she's a stranger  
on a bus:  
background  
in my environment.

To her,  
I'm a threat:  
Finger to chest,  
imprint on the skin and  
"I have pepper spray"  
but

I don't see her,  
emptiness in my eyes,  
sulking daze  
of a commuter,

sight stretched out  
along the streaks  
of the bus window  
or the stained plastic seats,  
the child in his father's lap,  
the old man with his head  
resting  
on the stained plastic seats,  
or the

woman  
on the bus  
with her hand  
in her bag  
and my emptiness  
an empty clip  
in an unloaded handgun.

*Instinct*

The will  
to fire  
is in the pressure  
of the finger  
against the trigger,

the pressure  
of the finger  
against the wrist.

There is pressure  
in my veins  
stirring up my blood,  
cleaning out my filth,  
my body—the sharp,  
pieces lingering  
around my insides,  
moving from my brain  
to my mouth,  
to my face  
and then  
my stomach,  
my legs,  
my feet,  
my hands,

the tips of my fingers  
pressed against my wrist,  
pressed against the trigger,  
pressed between  
trying to decide  
if this is—

*Taboo*

*I*

I could never be  
father's favorite,  
daddy's little girl.

I have a cock.

I am not my brother.

I am not *daughter*.

When I reached my 20s,  
I came out as bisexual,  
became more *comfortable*  
with self-love,  
learned  
confidence.

And yet,  
I would wake up  
some mornings  
and imagine I  
was a reflection  
of that which I could never  
be.

*II*

She bought a wig  
because her hair  
was growing too *slowly*.

I never tell her  
that I put it on  
once in a while,  
stand naked  
in the mirror and  
feel as if I  
have exposed  
some part of my flesh  
that had never been  
cut  
open.

She doesn't wear it anymore.  
It has become my *taboo*,  
and I keep it  
rightfully  
buried  
in a box  
in the closet.

*III*

This is not a transformation,  
no, this  
is the first wave  
of mutation,  
when the flowers begin to bud  
from my ears  
and wilt away the noise.

This is trained aggression  
being painted  
like murals  
or memoirs  
on the inside of my skin,  
underneath the tattoos  
and cell walls.

These murals become museums,  
dust ridden caverns  
barren and unused,  
unwanted,  
forgotten.

This is not a transformation,  
no.

This is the beginning  
of something beautiful.

The trees shed their leaves in autumn and I,

I shed the skin of my masculinity,  
and metamorphose from snake  
into butterfly,  
capable of hiding myself as prey  
and still feeling beautiful enough  
to take flight.

*Mutation*

I woke up  
with less bass  
in my voice,  
flowers  
in my throat.  
I shaved my face,  
clean of every hair,  
ran my fingers  
across my smooth cheeks.  
I shaved my entire body,  
stood wholly naked  
in front of the mirror,  
sucked in my stomach,  
tucked everything away,  
cried and  
admired  
my physique.  
I pulled  
at the hair  
on my head,  
tried to pull hard enough  
to stretch it out,  
exaggerate every strand.

Tomorrow,  
the rough texture  
of my face,  
like asphalt,  
will come back.  
Tomorrow, I'll  
clear my throat,  
pluck the flowers out  
from under my tonsils.  
I'll stand in front of the mirror,  
fully clothed,  
invulnerable.

SUFFOCATE

I know what you're thinking, what you're going to say, your concerns with every detail of this script. I know that there is no easy solution to this problem. I know that there is no easy way to say this, to say anything. I know that you will want to break my back over your shoulders when you hear the word *martyr* and wonder why I held any hope for someone that could have only saved themselves and maybe a few others too. There was aching in his voice, the aching of someone who wanted to mold young men into peacekeepers, someone who wanted a better world for our sons and therefore our daughters. I know that there was aching in her jaw when he hit her, aching in her bones as the pain ruptured her entire being. I can tell you that I do not forgive his fists or his anger. I can tell you that I do not forgive the fists that are used in anger, used to break the bodies of women, of young men, of the marginalized, isolated, and abused, of victims in a world pinned down to the Earth by masculinity. I know what you're thinking. There is no forgiving this. There is no forward when the men that have embodied their anger and become rage incarnate are forced to look in the mirror and realize their transgressions. They must exist in their suffering, exist in the body of a toxic man. Suffer in the body of a man. I know what you're going to say. You are concerned that I have made martyrs of monsters, but I can tell you that I only ever hoped to see someone else reverse the ugliness of their reflection and make the decision to shift their focus,

make amends, and change the world. I can tell you that I saw hope in Jahseh, and lost it in Christopher.

*Elegy for Jahseh*

How am I  
supposed  
to put a crown  
on your coffin  
when I love you  
for your empathy  
but despise  
*our* apathy—  
I once held down hands  
and didn't consider  
that in doing so  
I restricted their volition.  
I repented.  
You broke noses  
and energy,  
dead before  
you could beg  
like I.

You should have never  
gone down  
that road  
and forgotten  
your way back.  
But I suppose  
that there is

coincidence  
in the fact that  
we were both  
nineteen  
when we turned  
the mirror  
on ourselves.  
That we would have  
both  
been twenty-one  
by the time  
we reached  
self-reproach.  
You are a martyr.  
I am violent  
in my own metamorphosis.

I have broken and  
been—  
I am fragmented,  
scraps of man  
and child  
and trauma,  
the remains  
of my own  
mistakes.  
Violent old,  
violent new.

I see  
that we  
are nothing alike,  
and yet  
substitutable,  
comparable.  
I, hoping  
helplessly so  
that I subverted  
the toxicity.

How do I  
find the right way  
to immortalize you.  
Should I tattoo  
your name  
on my skin,  
give you  
forty more years  
of existence,  
give myself  
a reason  
to make this  
mourning  
feel rational.

You should have never  
been born,

forced to engrave  
your own body  
with masculinity,  
to build a man  
out of scars.  
I wish we  
could have had  
a conversation  
about the black eyes,  
the bickering,  
the act of  
puffing out  
our chests and  
keeping  
our  
faces  
free  
of  
any  
expression  
not  
rooted  
in  
anger.

You should have never  
had to bleed out  
in the driver seat.

There was loneliness  
in the video  
that made its way  
to every outlet.  
Martyr, surrounded by  
sirens.  
Martyr, forever stained  
with the guilt  
of not having  
the opportunity  
to repent.  
Martyr, I love you,  
I see you.  
I hear  
the repentance  
in your voice  
and I spread it out  
over the world  
like a sheet  
  
or a blanket.

*Say*

*After Christopher "The Crying Nazi" Cantwell*

How long to get here.

Treyvon Martin.

Michael Brown.

Tamir Rice.

White Nationalist

like a savage.

\*gun cocks\*

KelTec P3AT, 380 ACP.

Glock 19, 9mm.

Ruger LC9, 9mm.

There's a knife

in that bag over there,

and if you lose sight

of your fucking

power

what options do we have left?

Department of

Radical Agenda.

I have been told that

the whole entire point of this

is that we're capable,

more capable of violence.

KelTec P3AT, 380 ACP.

Glock 19, 9mm.

Ruger LC9, 9mm.

Who drove the police  
to stop trying to make this peaceful.  
There's a White Nationalist in power,  
and I'm trying to make myself  
threatening.

*Hold*

You fucking  
White nationalist asshole,  
primal missing link.  
Tiki Torches, Walmart, \$3.50.  
White Polo T-Shirt, Old Navy, \$15.99.  
Sunglasses, Chevron, \$6.99.  
I keep my fists  
balled up in  
my front pockets,  
because punching Nazis  
is the best option.

The Department of  
Radical Agenda  
has been voted in,  
and my arms are  
shaking—  
I tried to learn  
to control my *man*,  
but I want to unleash it.

Fuck the police.  
Fuck the president.  
Agent Orange and his  
American Gustapo  
are trying to provoke me,

and it's working.

I'm dancing with a woman  
as beautiful as cracked jaws and  
bruised faces,  
dancing with the idea  
of being threatening.

*Mirror, Mirror*

I stopped flipping one of my cigarettes over with each new pack.  
What I mean is God is as much on your side as he is mine.

*Have you heard the good word—*

Yes.

And my patience is running thin,  
sprinting forward to  
smack that fucking bible out of your hands,  
use the pages to lay a paper trail  
all the way to the front door step  
of those worthy eyes that lurk from under us  
and wonder why your best friend  
didn't share his light with them.

It's funny how those things go.

It's funny how much I want to laugh  
when I get angry with you.  
Tensions in cinderblock  
stacked high and mighty  
over the course of my rage  
and your wisdom that you do not share.

*Forgive me—*

Father is absent.

Don't take that away from me.  
I have just as much a right  
to carry this pain  
as you do those torches.

And if I ever see your right hand  
pointing up to your almighty,  
flat palm, incendiary pride,  
I'll beat God's light right out of you  
and use it as a spotlight.

*Have mercy on me, a sinner.*

But the line is too long,  
the razor's edge too sharp.  
I have too much time on my hands,  
and plenty of ideas where to put it.

*Condition*

This is the day-to-day:

Wake up.

Rethink mind.

Rethink body.

Count pulses.

Rethink mind.

Write.

Cut the paper

into figures

like a child:

Take the ugliness

of morning

and remake it

into airplanes and

papier-mache flowers.

I cut

my own arm off

and made a man

out of it.

Large figure,

heavy breather.

The air around me

is tight

like a noose

and I'm breathing

fine  
without thinking about it.

I'm trying to rethink  
what it means  
to be a man.