



On Earth As It Is

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2011

## Prayer

Jake Ricafrente

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# on earth as it is

*prayer as story, story as prayer*

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ABOUT

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*photo by matthew simmons*

## *Prayer*

*Jake Ricafrente*

*Sunlight is the best disinfectant.*

—Louis Brandeis

*When the sun come back and the first quail calls,  
Follow the Drinking Gourd.*

—Negro Spiritual

Our state—of books, condition, the body politic—  
Is disrepaired, or worse, and wanting light to spill  
Past veils, the banks of secrecy (chadors, Swiss laws,  
And airy fabrication: all the latent bric-  
A-brac of want), I probe the minor predicated clause,  
Some ancient honey fungus, a continental shelf  
For aims, designs. The world is tired of itself.

The quires of my childhood Funk & Wagnalls hid  
A thousand hours in my home. The sentinel pines  
Allowed so little light to illuminate the pages:  
Patio candles, a doorknob handkerchief were signs.  
A diagram of frontal lobes impaled by Phineas Gage's  
Iron tie. Each entry smelled of mold, of threat.  
Outside, my mother lit a secret cigarette.

When mendicant Diogones connected light  
And manumitted souls, what did he know of truth?  
At twelve, first love at Fort Bend County's fair  
(The bulbs, the dollar bills): I led the line at the kissing booth.  
The funhouse mirrors skewed signifier, sign.  
In love: the picture couldn't lie. Not far from there,  
The Sunday School rehearsed its "This little light of mine."

"Three strangers on a road: a priest..." begins the joke,  
And Veronese's painting is the sting where two

Men falling on each other forget the truth: one Jew,  
One Gentile in convenient chiaroscuro, and we  
Forget the fiction for the fact. Allow me smoke  
Signals, the artifice of bone, skin, words: Provide me wind,  
O Lord, inconstant and light, a fish, and a friend.

Jake Ricafrente holds an MFA from The Johns Hopkins University and is pursuing a PhD at Texas Tech University as a Chancellor's Fellow. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in The Cincinnati Review, South Carolina Review, Barrow Street, and elsewhere.

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