

ANDREW PAYTON

Photography

Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera.

— *Henri Cartier-Bresson*

The images I plan to collect
are free. Let's go, you said,
when told that never
had I walked on a frozen lake.

I'm still waiting on the trip —
like boiling milk jailed
by sheets of fractured glass;
I hear the edges you can

test with boot, judge with ear
to the ice. In a lake-less state
back east that rarely drops low
for long, my mother kept us

within a chain-linked frame.
Three youths stalking perimeters,
wielding tree branch machine guns.
That image is just as clear

as this you I see: both shuttered
in time. The words I plan
to collect are free. Speak them
whenever you like. The days

to collect are also free, though
I'm not sure I've enough
to afford them. I spent it all
accepting what I believed

at the time was a gift. Tonight
during record colds, I'll wait
for the sound of tires climbing
my snow-slick drive, an engine



idling and your voice, tinny
and eager — I'm here,
you'll say, to make good
on every promise. The secret

of photography is that images
are found and not created.
You only need four sides
and a flash. But what masters

never tell is how sometimes
you must wait for what seems
forever — before the boy lifts
his arms above the horizon,

before the woman in your viewfinder
steps into a perfect square of light.



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Cartography

In the white afternoon
along Iowa's route 20,
the land snow-heavy
and enormous,
I blinked and drifted
into the trajectory
of a tanker of hog's blood.
No collision this time,
no red smash
in the unplowed shoulder.

In Galway, we escaped
the rain and in the back pew
of a cathedral on the Corrib
listened to an organist
rehearse for mass. Music,
you said, is a roadmap
to the soul. With left hand
the organist plumbed
our defeat, and the right
routed the up-trickle
of our hopes.

Those old maps are more
feel than measure. They won't
lead anywhere we're not set
to go. The satellite image in my lap
is more accurate: Once I was
the green arrow, I hope to

become the red square. I must
only with my gas foot and fingertips
lead this traveling blue dot west.

A carriage. A hatchback.
A schooner. A whale-rig.
A forecast of tides and turns.
Seasick and snow-blind.



We never believed in guides,
only intuition — we haggled
our border crossings,
ignored weather advisories,
let strangers map
our itinerary. Maybe
the crash was coming; maybe
the crash still is.

ANDREW PAYTON is a Maryland native and graduate of the MFA program in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University. His poetry has been published in *Notre Dame Review*, *Fourth River*, *Louisville Review*, and elsewhere, and won the 2013 James Hearst Poetry Prize at *North American Review*. He is currently teaching in Svidník, Slovakia on a Fulbright fellowship. Find him at andrewpayton.wordpress.com.

