

POEMS

by Rufo Quintavalle (Paris)

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Nobody's Perfect

A turbaned Swami, a bearded Amish
and a shaven-headed US army recruit
mingle with Soccer Moms and LL Bean
button-downs in some Cincinnational
airport lounge or hotel lobby or some
such;

if Wallace stay-at-home Stevens
dreamt a France that was what water
is to the glockenspiel's plash, then
how am I to play my America now
Crispin's percussion *Kyoto*, *Iraq*,
Alaska, *Katrina* comes out wrong?

Chiaroscuro?

Put everything in context
something shines, but paintings darken
over time and kings and shepherds end
up crouched around a brownish light,
while spectators, from squinting, go blind.

A European History of Trains

Trains brought holidays, then later murder;
variations on the theme of order.

IA 52240

OK, at chucking out time
or after the parties, ie.
for a couple of hours round two
there will be call for them,
but why now at six o'clock
are there five yellow taxis
lined beside the blue and white and red
on silver of a Greyhound bus
called Chicago? The lack
of anything else to do?
The off-chance, a coffee, a ride one
day in ten; wait for San Francisco then
New York. Like most of life no reason.
But I am walking back from where no hope is,
where there is nothing, no, least of all, names;
so for this scene, a surety
of colors, some thanks.



Positioning

Greater

Middle

East

* Campaign slogan of Nicolas Sarkozy
in the French presidential election.

Le travail c'est la liberté*

Work is not freedom; maybe money is
(at any rate the lack of it enslaves
and work, like luck, is a way to get it)
but work, negotium, arbeit? Since when?



Rufo Quintavalle (1978) studied English at Oxford and the University of Iowa and now lives in Paris where he helps edit the literary journal *Upstairs at Duroc*. His poems have appeared in *Barrow Street*, *The Wolf*, *nth-position*, *transcript*, *Smiths Knoll*, *The Carolina Quarterly* and *elimae*. Translations of his poems have appeared in *Literaturen vestnik* (Bulgaria, transl. by Tzveta Sofronieva).
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