



Rhododendron in a Time of War

Corey Cook 2009 chapbook

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Tough Call: *Pemmican*

“glossy gravestone...”: *Unpublished*

Two Tree Swallows: *Good Intentions*

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“turkey vultures...”: *ocean diamond*

For Rachael, Henley,
Mom, Dad and Chas

*Special thanks to my teachers, professors
and the members of The Stone Bridge Poetry Project.*

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Mice

muffled scampering
and gnawing behind
ornate wallpaper

a threat to those of
us bouncing between
post and beam borders

they might taint our food
our plastic-coated
loaves of whole wheat bread

they might drop dirty
bombs on our pristine
kitchen countertops

they might deprive us
of something that is
ours-absolute ease

so dispatch the troops
send in the agile
to pounce and then claw

set and bait the traps
the SNAP may strangle
or perhaps mangle

a fellow mammal-
the deer-brought down our
tallest sunflower

the prodding muzzle
and quivering lips
weakened the thick stem

the brown faced flower
with a yellow mane
toppled to packed soil

black ants scurried down
the severed stem while
some plunged to the ground

deer escaped under
the drab dunes of Fall's
swirling foliage

he is elusive
so we feel we must
create a scapegoat

now a soiled finger
points accusingly
at supposed threat

Trimming the Rhododendron after His Reelection

Gusts of wind arrive and the rhododendron's branches scrape at the clapboards – flecks of khaki paint in the green grass growing against the foundation. The shrub is trying to get in. It is a panicky house pet trying to get you to open the door before an unseen pursuer catches up. The shrub is not welcome in the house and you cannot stand to listen to the sporadic scratching so you decide to cut the rhododendron away from the siding. With clippers in your chapped hand you announce, “I am going to trim the bush out front.” “I know another Bush that needs trimming...” she replies dryly. The first cut is well thought out and tentative (one's father might even say prudent) – a branch anchored by dark green leaves drops to the ground. You continue snipping – focusing on *him* now instead of the task at hand. *His* war. *His* lie to get us to think it was necessary to go to war. *His* religion that somehow says that this war is necessary because *he* declared it and *he* trusts that God speaks through *him*. You then look down – the rhododendron has been reduced to several branches. *Oh, shit!* you think to yourself. *I am carrying out his environmental plan.*

Watching Coverage of War in Iraq

Sprawled out on sofa.
Remote rouses TV – limp
body lies in street.

Rhododendron in a Time of War

Red petals clot on
its glossy exterior,
then drop to stained ground.

Free Speech

Neighborhood dog lifts
his leg on a faded Bush /
Cheney campaign sign.

February in New Hampshire

An appliance box nests in the bed of a brown truck,
the truck is eastbound on Route 202 & 9, as are we.
Its back bumper totters, burdened by the BUSH

sticker. NPR reports the death toll in Iraq, more Iraqis
killed, more American troops killed, more ally troops

killed. The box's flaps pop open & we are suddenly
caught in a blizzard of white Styrofoam packing
peanuts, the artificial snowstorm in BUSH's wake.

Tough Call

Do I watch W. stumble and chuckle his way
through the State of the Union address

or

do I watch Ozzy stutter and slur his way
through an episode of *The Osbournes*?

glossy gravestone
flanked by rippling flag –
freshly laid sod squares

Two Tree Swallows

brought beakfuls of hay, of horse hair, beakfuls of feathers
back to the grey birdhouse with light green trim. After the nest

was fashioned, after the eggs were laid, we were unable
to use our backyard because of a bird that weighed less
than an ounce. The male with the dark iridescent blue back

chattered at us, swooped at us, each wing a sharp blade glinting
in the sunlight, slashing at our hung heads, our raised shoulders.

* * *

The birdhouse has been pulled down, the tree swallows have died
and we are now bombarded by photographs taken in a war zone,

sounds recorded, letters written from a war zone. We remember
the summer our backyard was occupied by a bird, a bird able to keep
a family hostage in their own home and currently envision dozens

of airplanes, airplanes pregnant with bombs, bombs not used to protect
a brood, but “our” oil, dark and shimmery like a swallow’s back.

9/11/07

army recruiter's
car trolls by – schools of wide
eyed teens scatter

turkey vultures circle
above hemorrhaging sun –
Earth Day

Biography

Corey Cook grew up in South Strafford, VT. He received a BA from New England College in 2002. Corey's work has appeared in *The Aurean*, *Ballard Street Poetry Journal*, *Brevities*, *Common Ties*, *Entelechy International*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Northern New England Review*, *Pearl*, *Ship of Fools*, *The Wilderness House Literary Review* and many other publications. New work is forthcoming in *Chiron Review*, *A Handful of Stones*, *Oak Bend Review* and *Plain Spoke* (as featured poet). He works for a not for profit and edits *The Orange Room Review* which is an online publication dedicated to accessible poetry of substance with his wife, Rachael. They live in Contoocook, NH with their daughter.

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Compact Discs: *Mom's Favorite Vase* the demo tapes, *Kuypers* the final (MPV Inclusive), *Weeds and Flowers* the beauty & the desolation, *The Second Axing* *Something is Sweating*, *The Second Axing* *Live in Alaska*, *Pettus & Kuypers* *Live at Cafe Aloha*, *Pointless Orchestra* *Rough Mixes*, *Kuypers* *Seeing Things Differently*, *SD/SD* *Tick Tock*, *Kuypers* *Change Rearrange*, *Order From Chaos* *The Entropy Project*, *Kuypers* *Six One One*, *Kuypers* *Stop*, *Kuypers* *Masterful Performances mp3 CD*, *Kuypers* *Death Comes in Threes*, *Kuypers* *Changing Gears*, *Kuypers* *Dreams*, *Kuypers* *How Do I Get There?*, *Kuypers* *Contact • Conflict • Control*, *the DMJ Art Connection* *the DMJ Art Connection*, *Kuypers* *Questions in a World Without Answers*, *Kuypers* *SIN*, *Kuypers* *WZRZD Radio* (2 CD set), *Mom's Favorite Vase* and *The Second Axing* *These Truths*, *assorted artists* *String Theory*, *Oh* (audio CD), *Life At The Cafe* (3 CD set), *DMJ Art Connection* *Indian Flux*, *DMJ Art Connection* *Manic Depressive or Something*, *Chaotic Radio* *Chaotic Radio Week #1*, *Chaotic Radio* *Chaotic Radio Week #2*, *Chaotic Radio* *Chaotic Radio Week #3*, *Chaotic Radio* *Chaotic Radio Week #4*, *Chaotic Radio* *Chaotic Radio Week #5*, *Chaotic Radio* *the Chaotic Collection* *Collection #01-05* (5 CD set) etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), *Chaotic Elements* (2 CD set), *Chaos in Motion* (6 CD set), *SD/SD* *Screaching to a Halt* (EP), *P&J* *Two for the Price of One* (EP), *Kiki*, *Jake and Haystack* *An American Portrait*, *Kuypers/the Bastard Trio/Paul Baker/the JoAnne Powlers Trio* *Fusion* (4 CD set).