

# Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

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## Let them fall like hard fruit

Ryan J. Browne

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LET THEM FALL LIKE HARD FRUIT

Ryan J. Browne

There are measures to keep me safe  
beyond the nightsticks with their rubber-band grips

locks and keys and humming doors  
Beyond razor wire

one rule allows me to carry myself away:  
the crimes all my *Whys?* they cannot be

Let them hang in the yard  
as an endless number of pull-ups

and if dropped let them  
fall like hard fruit—horse apples—

and huddle in rotting  
Leave them for the blinking

shotgun in the clerk's face  
for the roaches

rolled and stuffed in elastic bands  
for the contusions bloom bruises

for pleads  
Leave them for the squirrels

Only once did I stoop in wonder:  
in the *New York Times* I found

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the bum on the curb  
stabbed and black and

as thunder can only name its flash  
read the name I've seen stenciled in block

letters on state-issued whites of a skinhead  
skinhead

who yanked the blanket back  
as his friends drank and drove

a knife into the man And I am  
filthy a snoop rubbernecker inquisitor

confidence man whose briefcase clicks closed  
like poetry's door who now must forget

in the way we never really  
forget our bones