

# Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

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## from Graffiti Signatures

Cody Todd

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Todd: from Graffiti Signatures

# FROM GRAFFITI SIGNATURES



## CODY TODD

### A SCHOOLYARD LIGHT POLE IN DENVER

Tagged scrawl of lettered,  
star-shaped selves.  
Glossed and wet, gold marker  
paint beneath the lamp.  
Your face in its maze,  
its architecture.  
Illegibility  
contesting the moon's  
matter-of-factness.  
Permanent longhand:  
before the letter  
became the letter,  
it would morph into  
a face, this shaky  
planet hanging  
in space, with a thousand  
feet of braided hair  
going everywhere  
on the schoolgirl  
punching the daylights  
out of the tetherball.

Waltzed into the city. Waltzed  
onto the tongue. You could have stitched me

to your shadow all night. The tongue  
discloses nothing. Hear lips. Hear thighs.

An earthquake rattles the fish tank.  
A penny for a piranha

that floats up to the top. We sucked  
oysters and built a village

out of tissues. We died warmly as poems  
and resurrected coldly as

noises of kiss and suck, where the city  
was the lost book, of disordered chapters

and stolen missives,  
where the message must not leave

its sender to be received.

**WITHIN AN ALLEYWAY IN CHICAGO**

*—for Stuart Dybek*

Windy names congealed faster than rain turns snow. My meal was air. Grace hid in a salt shaker inside the Nighthawk's Diner—a flame we all huddled around to stay alive. Ironweed scenes and boxcar transience, or city scenes through each paper lantern of a veiled open window. Where rain paints the wet cement city into a cloister, a heart where the trains vein between each chamber.

## Told from Graffiti Signatures

Toyota covered in land crabs. Imagination  
is a stone wall covered in lichen. Imagination  
is a spire splattered white with guano and pigeon.

Imagination is the half-mouth, gnarled lips  
pulled back from the gums and buckteeth as crooked as  
duck feet. Imagination is the possibility of the bricks  
when the rubble speaks for itself, the song  
of locusts and honeybees, bitching and bitching some more.

### UNDER A BRIDGE IN PITTSBURGH AND PURGATORY

*—for Sean Thomas Dougherty*

Blue on blue in two separate tones and hue

reads: Live, from Planet Rock!

Wondrous digital music from the heart inside

the owl, watching the bucolic get gutted

for the aqueous dream of the metropolis,

watching our conspiracy with rust.