

DAVID BRENDAN HOPES

A Malediction

after James Wright

Just off the highway to Aurora, Ohio,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two highway patrolmen
Darken with satisfaction.
They have come gladly out of the speedtrap
To ticket my car and me.
I step out of the car onto the berm
Where they have been abiding all day, bored.
They swagger fatly, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They pull ticket books from their pockets. They love it.
There is no authority like theirs.
Satisfied once more,
They begin writing the details in the darkness.
I would like to punch the fatter one in the face,
For he has waddled over to me
and leaned against my side-view mirror.
He is pink and pimpled,
His hat falls dumb on his forehead.
And the revolving lights move over his form
That is as delicate as a beached sea-cow, sweating.
Suddenly I realize
That if he stepped back two inches he would be
Smashed into the pavement by a Peterbilt.

Running Route 700, Hiram, Ohio

Slowing home I met the light.
Whatever before I thought the light was,
he was greened and frilled then
passing through the trees.
He was body immense and intimate,
leaning dusk, coaxing star in the farthest corner.
Light a stillness in that flood:
splendor of bluejay,
red ravel of sweetpea,
fir, stone, caught in clarity,
a robed-in-calm-flame-field,
I gathered to him on the field's edge;
so whole is the fire's consecration,
so slow is the rose of the ditch to open.