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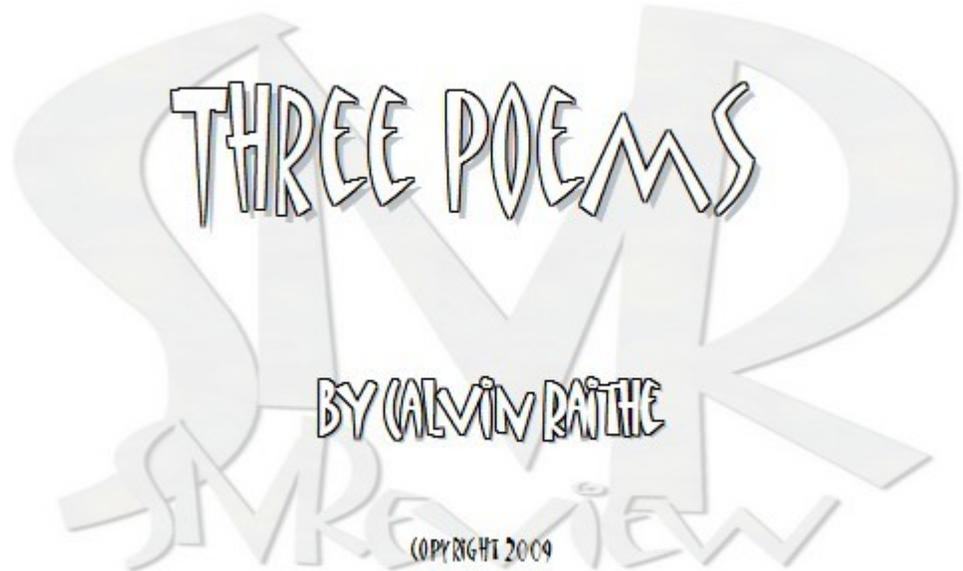
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Graven

The forgotten stone
was once chiseled,
but like a talcum tale
age whittled
at the inscriptions
on its ivory face
swallowed
in tattered grass
despite the keeper's efforts.

A neighboring statue,
sculpted and finished
to a linoleum sheen,
eclipses the sun
while the keeper,
with hair cycling
through a white-scale rainbow,
fends the foliage,
ignoring yesterday's
achievements,
laboring,
never noticing
time's slight smoothing
of refined cuts.

Conversation: Poem and I

I hate you
that leaps from my tongue,
seeps from my fingertips
and spills onto the page.

Given a choice,
I wouldn't create you.

You, sadist, torment me.

You wouldn't Be without me.
I am your father,
your God;
I can abandon you
or perfect you;
your fate is mine.

You don't exist.

But I do, and
from curiosity
I will fix you.

I will carve you,
construct you
as I see fit.

You need me.

You need me.

Perhaps
we are one,
and we need each other.

Perhaps...
We are one.

We need each other.

Inspiration

The structural welders high above,
scale steel skeletons,
shooting sparks of orange and white
like tigers drowning in stars.

I stare with awe
for the welders,
the builders,
the Crafters,
know why we must sweat
and bleed and destroy
our bodies
to create something bigger:
we understand the cathartic contradiction:
the perfection
of details to relax our souls.

But as I watch them
remove wallets
stuffed green
like lettuce patches,
I notice how few

remain
on the ground
manning the blueprints.

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Calvin Raithe is a graduate of the creative writing program at Oswego State University in upstate New York. In addition to poetry, he also writes short stories, personal essays, and is presently finishing work on his first novel. He is pleased to say his first publication is with *SNReview*. All comments, good or bad, are encouraged via email to: calvinraithe@yahoo.com.