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4-21-2022

## Excerpts from Student Poetry Portfolio

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### Recommended Citation

Knapp, Noah, "Excerpts from Student Poetry Portfolio" (2022). *Celebrating Scholarship and Creativity Day*. 193.

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Hello, my name is Noah Knapp. I will be sharing on my short poetry collection with the working title, “Landmarks.” Landmarks, as we know, are a feature of a landscape that is easily seen from a distance—an object that enables someone to establish their location. Landmarks, however, can be temporal and not only spatial. They may arrive as an event marking an important turning point. Landmarks overtime can acquire greater meaning than just what appears outwardly. They can become more than a tower or statue, a milestone or crisis. These greater meanings can be collective: when I say, “Statue of Liberty,” many of us probably next think of freedom, justice—maybe immigration. Or these meanings can be more private. When I say, “the Shouse,” it probably sounds like nonsense to anyone outside my family—or at least means something different to those people.

In my earlier writings, I have often stayed tethered to those private Landmarks: my hometown, my friendships, my emotions—and, I think, feared the “otherness” that lays beyond them. However, I have also seen the inhibitions caused by my writing revolving only around those safe, familiar landmarks—only around *me*, I suppose. In this collection, I have certainly kept one eye on those points—after all, my personal experience is all I know—but I have also tried to find the “other”—to find more collective landmarks to triangulate my experience as somewhere between them. In other words, I am hoping to map out, using all the landmarks around me, where I am as a writer. Some attempts have failed: I have grown frightened by the process of moving out of what’s comfortable. Others, I hope, have succeeded—and I also hope to continually grow outward as a writer moving forward. Writing, at its most basic level, is often an attempt to bridge a person to others. Writing is communicating. And this bridge, this road, is pointless unless it takes us to a new destination—to encounter something *other* than our immediate surroundings.

With that being said, I will begin today from a place I know well, and then journey forward:

## **Aberdeen**

My home is a fume-pumping corn field

My home is the city on a nation  
Little cookie cutters on the prairie

The August sun bleeds            Wildfires or not  
Dust that’s food but we would not eat  
It settles on windshields        Touched  
By Jack Chaff  
Touched by God            Our eyes squint  
Though, some (no one) call it  
Battleground    Some (everyone) say  
We are not woken

My home is near the highway  
Then a ditch then fields the blood  
Sun congeals heavier Dropping faster  
It feels as the corn bursts up  
Its tassels Runs its blades  
To transfuse the light Faster  
And faster it circulates The corn  
Rippling now Why else does the  
Sun collapse so soon Faintly  
Lighting after it begins to bleed  
Each August But this temporary  
A momentary insufficiency

### Used

Grace at the Middy said sexual harassment  
Drunk Told her "Have a seat"  
John said curriculum change  
He is writing the new one  
My Philosophy of Religion professor said Let us not presume a deity

They drove him out of the department Wednesday morning  
The Zoom reactions piled up

And he had always said Drive truck He UDT (Used to Drive Truck)

And I had said I would too With a CDL

I see chrome with potential to blind  
Rings of daggers For what purpose Brady could not tell me Brady drives truck  
Beds across streets put a city to sleep

I am WNA (Watching the News Again) Like I do to self-deprecate  
And my professor is there

At the border (I thought they hauled him out the department  
Not the country)

ONA (On the News Again)  
UBU (Used to Being Used)

He has NJH (No Job Here)

In Ottawa in winter You cannot see the first floor of buildings from the street  
I have not been to Ottawa They said that on GMA



your head... And tourists and locals use them alike. They're all over Athens but also in mountain villages—even alongside some highways.

### Περίπτερο

Henry and I had walked this sidewalk the night before.  
It was not late for Greece—as far as we had come to know.  
A περίπτερο lighted a section ahead of us.  
This περίπτερο stood unguarded,  
Near a park outside of Κέρκυρα. We were alone  
As we walked.

The name of these kiosks I only now find funny,  
Researching it. A little temple. What god resides here?  
Αλφα, the god of beer? Caprice, the goddess of σοκολάτα? A cult  
Statue sits in the center of the ναός, protected  
From the darkness outside where we shiver on our walk.  
Offerings of coins and banknotes are placed in a shallow bowl  
Or flat on a counter. Some are protected  
By souvenir colonnades—bags of blue and white soccer balls,  
Μάτι dangling down from the corners of the pediment.  
These eyes are life-size or larger than a double μούντζα,  
All-seeing. I was never told so, but the μάτι  
Were a three-sided shield around every kiosk.  
They sold, blocked, and warded off.

A man with charred hair and a graying  
Mustache showed his shoulders and head  
In the front window frame. He may have concentrated on us,  
The few seconds we could be seen. He was not  
Trapped in the kiosk. I felt a warmth  
Push towards us, nice on my cold face, and out  
Into the street. There was no one out,  
Except us two Americans with curly hair and a man  
With his mustache in his consumerism temple.  
He did not say hello, and we did not either.

Behind every kiosk owner is a wall of  
Tobacco, mostly τσιγάρα. These walls  
Propped up my non-addiction the four months  
I was in Greece. I bought my first pack  
From a tall man with a shaved head. I know he's tall  
Because he stood up when I bought them. I didn't know  
Names of cigarettes, but I recognized Marlboro.  
I asked for a pack. 'Κόκκινα ή λευκά' the tall man asked.  
I didn't know there were two kinds of Marlboro.

I bought a small lighter with a pack of λευκά.

The man in the kiosk outside of Κέπκυρα  
Was behind us. Henry and I kept walking  
Through the dark to our hostel. 'Are you going  
To post-travel after finals?' Henry asked.  
'I think so. I want to go to Скопје.' 'Is anyone else  
Going?' 'Are you?' I asked. 'I'm not sure yet.'  
We walked around the edge of a roundabout. The sidewalk  
Was worn with grass hiding itself between the cracks.  
My down coat was folded inside my hostel closet,  
Still two kilometers up the island. I shivered in my rain  
Jacket and Henry pulled his hat down past his ear lobes.  
'Do you miss home?' I asked. I started to zip down  
My jacket and pull my pack of Karelias out. But the cold  
Pushed in, so I pulled the zipper up again. I didn't like  
To smoke around Henry.

If there's time, I can try to answer any questions.