Excerpts from Student Poetry Portfolio

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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
Who is awake in Ottawa at this time of year

**High School Gym: My Sister is Άντιγόνη**

At the bottom of the student section  
Every  
Classroom door relieved at the cleanliness  
By owls and she does not know yet  
Did not  
His mother comes to the  
_Cheerleaders anyway_  
The seven turn and I  
Find a hotel room for graduation  
Find that part in the manual or cannot  
Leather fenced in by barbed wire and  
Her brother one feeding the earth the  
Human law is spread in place of one’s  
Fists They set off to heart their team  
Finds her body slumping and dangling  
Green sounds silent behind the seven today  
Guarded Yet treads alone to bury  
Hand holds a pom-pom An alarm blares in  
He grows redder and the seven wait for _I was wrong_  
Her brothers are dead Her uncle is in torn  
_Pants_ Someone at home either did not  
_Say that_  
And he did And the father  
Other feeding buzzards and wept upon  
_Parents_ She nots herself Her lover  
Her tomb will be of stone as her uncle’s rule  
Over her he falls their blood mixing  
_Parents will be here soon_  
Did you poop  
Points his finger too In my sister’s face  
_Pooped his underwear_ She guided him to  
_Splintered stakes_ She too must be  
_Seven some girls and others young women stand_  
They later find the father _My son would not_  
_Scrunches his mouth_ He did not He  
_Wish they would have punched pom-pom_  
_Two tones which decided by a chest-concealing color_  
_The bathroom_ He gave her his underwear  
_This is your fault_  
_Who gives a shit about_  
_Twenty-nine four-year-old’s and one poops his_  
_You cannot poop your pants_ The boy  
_Your pants_ The boy going commando

For some background, in Greece, there are these little kiosks, called περίπτερα where you can buy chocolate, beer, little Greek flags, cigarettes, glass Evil Eyes—or μάτι as big as
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? Άλφα, 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 Κέπκορα 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.