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# LE SPLEEN DE POUGHKEEPSIE

JOSHUA HARMON

The University of Akron Press Akron, Ohio



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"The Poughkeepsiad" is dedicated to Hua Hsu.

"[What are the pitfalls...]" is dedicated to Paige Ackerson-Kiely.

The initial versions of "Two Pastorals (II)" were written in the company of Andy Axel, Carolyn Bergonzo, Kyle Holter, Brian Kim, and Danielle Unger—as well as the spirit of Max Lewin—and are dedicated to them.

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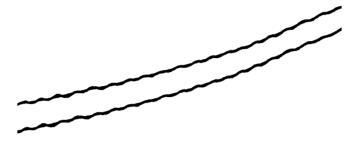
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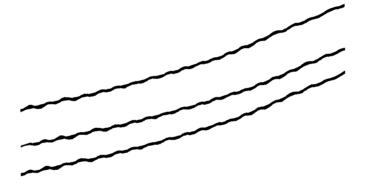
J'omets la description du taudis...

—Charles Baudelaire, Le Spleen de Paris





TWO PASTORALS





The automatic garage-door opener lifts on a prospect of Poughkeepsie: row of parked cars along curb, man leaf-blowing each falling leaf, sumac growing beneath the overpass: if you're not part of the problem, you're part of the lengthening tragedy: we see all the others slipped into the bright shapes of endeavor, imprints snow slowly fills, but the stray detours and workarounds of the secret city inside the more obvious one elude our plundered adornments and church-bell quarter-hours: on the outskirts of the absurd attention to the material life, of course the factories are empty and the train line overgrown, and the everyday fills the ravine beside the highway: the passive voice speaks on our winds and in the humming of our truck tires, the delicacy of Saturday-night videophoning and bonfires across the valley in woods past their peak

To Shop-Vac the sidestreet of one's grass clippings is to say I am dispossessed of a deeper fortitude with which I might lose track of the beam or the bank supporting the idea of deliverance from myself and other, similar errors: later, the cruiser spotlights semi-suburban houses, those dark alleys emptied but for early woodsmoke and diesel fumes paid on or before this inescapable duty resolved shortfalls in neighborliness, and the engine running all night inside a garage does not kill the murderous rage you feel: the working life peaces out and declares its independence