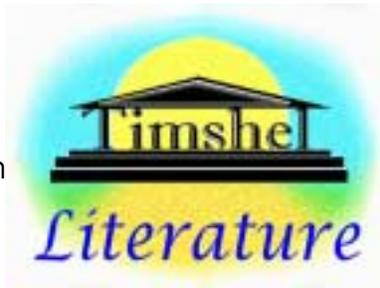


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Company for the Commuter
by Justin Katz

On northbound 495 in Massachusetts,
44 miles from 24 with 16 left to 2,
About 3/4 of a mile from head to toe,
Though perhaps more or less,
There lies, on her back, an earthen lady.

A vulgar man might think of her as naked,
Awaiting, year after year, a lover who has yet to come;
And surely there is some piquancy to her slightly raised left knee;
And surely, were I vulgar, I might attempt to please the lady's expectation
Though scanty might my petty stature prove.

And if I were a wealthy man who could buy the land upon which she lies,
And so call her mine, and mine her heart for affection,
And put up great fences around her so that she might be mine alone:
For I would forgive no covetous trespasses had I means enough to prevent them.
Yes, were I wealthy, I might have the privilege of forgetting
That I could never build walls high enough to keep her should she decide to leave.

And if my own breast swelled with philanthropic aspirations
I might build upon the center of her mountainous one
A high-spined kitchen where all those in need could come
And be assured of succor from the well that I would sink
Or relaxation upon the bed of her stomach dell
Though I can't help but fear that such a matron might be sullied if trampled.

But once I've passed, and can see her no longer,
I rather prefer her left alone,
Though already it may be too late,
For she is held down by utility lines
And a highway across her neck,
Placed there so that each commuter may feel
The lascivious prick of committing murder benignantly in passing.

And so, with little hope of thrill upon reaching my destination
I find myself wishing I had stopped midway.