

TONY HOAGLAND

## Foghorns

When that man my age  
came towards me in the fast food restaurant  
with his blue plastic tray

and stood next to the table where I sat alone  
(there was no place else to sit),  
I looked up at him in wonder

But when a black man and a white man  
turn their glances on each other  
the air suddenly fills up  
with secret signs like

MLK and NBA, like KKK  
and NRA, like DWB and NWA  
—and it gets hard to see through  
all that smoke and burning shrubbery.

And what with the internal sirens  
and the historical foghorn  
and the sprinkler system  
designed to suppress non-categorical  
fraternization

and the voice that says *Impossible*  
and the other one that says *Lying Motherfucker*  
you just want to put your hands over your head  
and step away from the vehicle.

Here is what we know:  
history is a car wreck from which  
our parents did not escape;  
our nation is a career criminal;  
we were raised to be liars and deniers.

Now here we are in time for our own  
moment of unequal opportunity  
which we will probably fail to understand  
or raise our best selves to.

In this land where consciousness is a fiction,  
Through the oxygen mask of my lies  
and the skin of my self-deception,  
this is what I say:

Brother, lean your brown face down  
and let me look at you.

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