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## Ars Poetica

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*Matt W. Miller*

## Ars Poetica

How to recall that industrial maroon carpet home  
room overpacked public high school stink of shit  
weed dip spit blood pencil shavings armpit  
How to bring back the boy who sat in the back  
corner every morning quiet Cambodian kid  
How to remember his face his voice his name  
years later or even days later oh what we didn't see  
How to talk about how he was shot walking home  
and at school the next day made it our drama  
How to be shot walking home from chess club  
to find out we even had a chess club that met after last  
bell when I'd drive an old Buick out to practice  
How to be caught up in a whiskey pom-pom narrative  
of football games, parking lot brawls, which packy  
wasn't checking IDs or being watched by the cops  
How to imagine him walking home across the lot  
where the Gervais family once had that car dealership  
How to imagine that lot where my dad bought a Buick  
not the one I drove but that long white station wagon  
How to be that all alone boy as a car rolled up  
I picture that Olds full of kids who crowbarred Jamie  
How to kill a friend trying to quit a crew the Tiny Rascals?  
Asian Boyz? I think about that time some buddies of mine  
came at me at a city pool for thinking I'd ratted them out  
How to be a kid and quit that life and have to bleed for it  
and hearing from a history teacher he was a smart kid  
and wanted to go to college and get out of here  
How to bleed out alone into that potholed cement  
I almost cracked an axle cutting through there once  
How to be cooked into a cautionary tale for white kids  
*See what happens? and their moms Can't they just fit in?*

How to be a mother at home weeping for a son  
carried it turns out from one killing field to another  
How to be called *gook* and feel small and afraid  
because we pick on a *him* but steer clear of *them*  
when letter jackets harass you just like their daddy cops do  
How to be next morning whispering *He sat over there*  
and look how we circle up to sigh and hug each other  
How to forget his name how to never really know  
and never really try to find out beyond Googling gang  
slayings that happened in Lowell in '92 for a damn poem  
How to do a half-ass autopsy on his brief headline of history  
and rivet his corpse onto the backfat of my memory  
How to peddle in flesh and how to colonize his death