

# Catch out the God

by [Millicent Borges Accardi](#) (April 2024)



Seated Clowness –by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1896

## Catch out the God

In you first. You have to catch  
Out the god before you  
are crossed and exorcised  
In such a way as to X out the past  
Feelings of god and you and what  
The heck this all means. An astonishment  
Of those days spent praying and holding  
In the middle of a deep round of  
Hypnosis and reaching. You were told  
Not to reach but you did and the journey  
Was steep and there was more time you  
Spent on figuring the difficult things out  
Passages that made no sense on the page  
Even when you didn't want or expect to  
Understand, you tried. And, when no one  
else was around to put a check mark  
next to your name when you checked out  
of the world, you vied and dropped  
to your knees and hoped for the worst,  
unlike everyone else who beckoned to  
the best side the sunshine of everyone's  
street. So, contrary to disrespect and new  
to what being stoic means, you were reaching and  
Crossing, reciting the song about the river  
Gathering you up in its clutches when you  
realize that no one was noticing.  
You were doing all these things to shake  
And tremble with faith—and you wanted  
To approach the apex of leaping. It was true  
that you wanted to believe in how it was  
When you finally catch out the god  
Inside you and persevere and persevere.

All the Night

*from Psalm 6 "make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears"*

The ceremony of speech, an annoyance  
to long nights ending who end at 7am  
when the hubris of light comes upon  
the backyard view from my couch.  
The uncertainty of darkness, taken  
into the prone body once again.  
Each night with its own uncertain  
annoyances, full of deceit and the brand  
of riddles held back by a moody disposition,  
a person who says, "No, thank you."  
Derisions held in place by gentle weeing.  
A blank offering for a blank time when a day  
held tight comes in faster than it should,  
as errands initiate, interact and intertwine  
only when others from the outside  
arrive back from journeys, tired and steeped  
inside the normalcy of work and paper  
money. They want more than you can give,  
fortified by sameness of the very opposite  
of solitude, a backwards stint of business  
penance, akin to, say, the noise of sinking  
into defeat like cushions pressing into a wooden frame  
as the hours dwell inside me, now, empty  
like guest rooms, grateful for the lack  
of use, so many reasons to climb out  
of the poetics of this dilemma, every day,  
the standard of being without, without  
builds up the animosity, an ending without  
being finished. It is in this uncertainty

that we allow continuation, taunt stillness  
that bends away from the dirt of ever-after  
conversations, dull topics overlooked and underdone,  
that we reason with quite clearly. and try to cherish.  
Try to keep. Like, "I love my gay son" and "How very."  
The verses thrown like voices between trusty beliefs  
that we used to hold close, written prayers held far  
away from solid skin and guilt that presses down  
when we walk on dry grass, when life, as we  
know it is merely a temporary stay.

## Freedom Day

They'd seen it all turn from freedom  
to quiet church celebrations where  
we lifted our voices to sing over church  
buffet food in a church parking lot,  
refreshments, alongside service  
celebrations of how it all happened  
over red velvet cake, and Juneteenth  
strawberry pie in a square tin.  
Confidence, as a crutch, we'd seen it  
all, leading down the white lines  
in the trafficked road to  
contentment and calm.  
Inside the jumpy, shocking, sulky  
truth of our spotless lives,  
made full and fast and dangerous  
because of who we are and were  
And it makes for a full cut  
of super-seeded nationalism, a line drawn  
down the middle in a country  
that celebrates the 4th of July and  
Groundhog day with much more glory,

Juneteenth, a myth for the rest of our lives,  
a vision, stark of deadness, like a lack  
of clarity, like uncut stones on an altar,  
we are still a felony walking.  
As if they hadn't already taken  
enough. They'd watched it all turn like earth  
in a drought, eclipsed by the struggle.  
I am not the person to tell this story,  
radiate and witness the country,  
glorious inside. This story of hot links  
dyed red and barbeques with Big Red  
Soda and confederate hibiscus tea.

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Millicent Borges Accardi, a Portuguese-American writer, is the author of four poetry collections, including *Quarantine Highway* (FlowerSong Press) and *Only More So* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland). Among her awards are fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Fulbright, CantoMundo, Creative Capacity, California Arts Council, Foundation for Contemporary Arts (Covid grant), Fundação Luso-Americana (Portugal), and Barbara Deming Foundation. She has recent poems in *Salamander*, *TAB*, and *North Dakota Quarterly*.

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