

# Two Poems by Henry 7. Reneau, Jr: "watch what they mouth say, but listen what they hands do" and "The Book of Hours"



AIR THORNS / *image by Amalie Flynn*

**watch what they mouth say, but listen  
what they hands do**

i grew up hearing certain accents  
& vocabularies  
& speech patterns  
that were the aural essence of *Home*

or the audible signal of danger: the feral howl  
of incarceration, or the sudden voicelessness  
of the morgue,  
that makes *Home* a muted whisper of fear,  
or pain that is slow to change, that is now, & how  
it's always been, a metaphor's promise  
of how it ought to be: trying to reach the next world  
with a spoon;

(*thrust*  
*lever lift toss.*)

my life, a soundtrack of false platitudes  
flattering the air of thorns about my ears,  
continually looping a distorted truth,  
a disabled symbolism for freedom,  
like a gimp  
would drag the weight of her body,  
to exist  
with a deleted allotment of common sense,  
blind, cripple & crazy as  
drowning in silence. we hear nothing,  
but the clean crack of hearts breaking,  
& the accepted ruin  
of *matters of fact*. Repetition  
like a shovel searching out the truth;

(*thrust lever*  
*lift toss.*)

a soundtrack now, looping  
funeral dirges of national carrion eagles &  
securitized oil, the official government  
propaganda: an Oscar worthy suspension of disbelief  
patriotic cheering the murder of bin Laden,  
that goes viral & seals a book deal,  
& movie credits, for Seal Team 6;

*(thrust      lever      lift      toss.)*

## **The Book of Hours**

The sun sets on enhanced interrogation,  
even as it rose, exponentially, on drone strikes,  
like the sum of collateral damage  
became a euphemism, beyond our peripheral  
vision, & we held the shining black eye  
of history in our mouth, as if  
we imagined God in our every breath, as if we  
are, all of us, alone in the complicity of others.