

FRONT PORCH

HERO WORSHIP

John Evans

A birthday dinner. Year of the Snake. From the red envelope,
a kindly wizard foreshadows misfortune:
one million yen will buy one kiss.

The heart approximates the logic of its universe.
Empathetic ellipses. Passionate parabolas. Heuristic holes
so empty that nothing, not even time, escapes.

The attempt to understand is its own adjustment. A handful of stars
wither like banknotes pinned to the branch of a plum tree.
Only the leaves are green.

What's left to resurrect in an age of perpetual nostalgia
except the memory of memory,
the persistent clamor of forgetting?

Unrequited love is a broken watch
admired in passing. Set to the hour,
it's a fine substitute for the real thing.

I am thinking of the old way to say it—
ambrosial exaltation, dreaming of hair—
saltwater marshes and the dogwoods in October.

Today's special is the iced tea with cardamom, coconut milk,
and one thousand small maps of the universe:
green lotus + blue dove + white fawn.

John W. Evans's poems appear in print in *Best New Poets 2006*, *5AM*, *Poetry East*, *Nimrod*, *Alimentum*, *Epicenter*, *Harpur Palate*, *Americans Do Their Business Abroad: An Anthology of Peace Corps Travel Writing*, *Florida English*, and online at *Stirring* and *Opium*. He teaches at a public high school in Bucharest, Romania.

“The apartment where we live in Bucharest has a small balcony. It looks out over a virtual diorama of the last 150 years of Romanian history: the former palace of the royal family, the former Communist party headquarters, the current national art museum and library, Revolution Plaza, several revolution memorials, a three-story Orange Mobile store, The Hilton. We're impressed, and our ex-pat friends are, too. But whenever we host Romanian visitors, they shake their heads and tell us, ‘It's nice, but it's such an *old building...*’”