

from Juked #6, Spring 2009

E.R. CARLIN

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## ODE TO MY AVATAR

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program OdeToMyAvatarPascal (Output) ;  
begin  
PascalIRun2And3/4MilesForYouAlone
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### 1. [millcreekmetroparks.com/trails6.htm](http://millcreekmetroparks.com/trails6.htm)

Not an ounce of pretension, I say  
that the un-Walkman jogger will never know high and burnout.  
When the rhythm's so strong, your pace alters, step by step.

*On a picnic bench  
just off the hill,  
a balloon dog  
dangles above  
a young boy  
on spooled thread.  
As he lifts the band-aid  
from his knee,  
someone with blue  
facepaint bends  
over to kiss it.*

Low batteries—  
slow down, speed up, and I am reminded that everything good  
rises from opposition.

So I imagine Hastseltsi, god of racing,  
paces ahead, his red flash continuous, soaking my headband,  
as the murmur of heartbeats drum up my ears.

*Under dandelion puff,  
an old woman  
surfaces  
from a sea of tall grass  
blowing bubbles  
from a stem.  
Her hair sparkles  
with fish scales.  
Her cell-phone  
a siren's song.*

I cross Shields Road to East Hike-and-Bike;  
I Frogger-style everything, hop on a length of log, leap the curb,  
dodge traffic to the lip-synch of wizards walking invisible dogs

and sages with hearing aids. Unexpectedly, the god of racing  
evaporates against a fender, and his wind *ruh* rises beneath me.  
I dread the parking lot beyond.

*Under dark clouds,  
a raccoon-bearded priest,  
covered in blood,  
stands on a soapbox  
with a fist full of money  
wagging skyward,  
and a dozen crew-cut teens  
in army fatigues  
begin a slam dance  
in front of  
the first chair violinist.*

## **2. [millcreekmetroparks.com/trails7.htm](http://millcreekmetroparks.com/trails7.htm)**

Wagner has taken control.

Still that's not the point, sure I could  
shake it, *wah-wah* pedal it, bootleg my endorphin rush by flipping

my sacred 'electric' bundle from Local to DX on trickster solos.

*Over firecrackers,  
a metro-park ranger  
with dirty hands  
yo-hoes 'ice-cream'.  
Three young girls  
put sugar cones  
to their ears to hear  
a glacier melting.  
The god of fire, Agni,  
extends his 7 arms  
across a levee of clouds.*

Even now I run like a robotic fox,  
fly like a mechanical jay or even the representamen, Raven.  
Full speed, non-stop abandon. Scared of the sacred, I think

of finding nothing beyond digital.  
So I make the Walkman de-crescendo me, force me  
to coast on fumes, voodoo of alkaline

in the bloodstream. I fall  
into a trance halfway out. Beyond the choir of braches,  
I huff past a drinking fountain to lie down in a polluted sandtrap.

*A shriek from over  
by the 9  
where a mime  
with blood streaming  
from his throat  
pumps for water  
at a dry well.  
Just then, the sky busts  
and all run –  
eyes wet, hair wet, all wet  
to their cars.*

Dreaming up,  
the crab trees flower open for the cannonball rain, and my body  
lifts  
awakening just past the lich-gate of treetops.

Then dropping back to wet sand,  
as if I had sat on my own mote, body castle sinking into the  
ground,  
I was alone with myself, a hollow golem in a courtyard of wind.

*Over everything then  
is rhythm –  
beer cans,  
tin rattle  
in rain.  
Old toddler diaper  
becomes  
a breathing fishbowl.  
And still the orchestra  
plays on,  
program repeating,  
everyone deleted.*

Alone, but for that one familiar woman:  
headphones on, overalls rain-soaked, lashes raised and eyes  
closed,  
her palms up, listening as a nimble violin accompanies thunder.

To her everything is clear. She came to hear the music.

### **3. [millcreekmetroparks.com/pdf/MCPmap.PDF](http://millcreekmetroparks.com/pdf/MCPmap.PDF)**

I came to hear the music too,  
but I am immobile, afraid of hyperventilating again,  
so I keep meditating on my next incarnation –

past Vishnu locked, leather and studs, with Kali,

past geekgold and wishlists, all the way  
past my wheezing body into this park system website.

*Under the black troll bridge,  
two boys  
with wine cork  
earplugs  
want to become blood brothers,  
but since their pocket knives  
are combs,  
they burn  
each other's thigh  
with menthol slims.*

This avatar's an ashcan, a sensitive instrument.  
I experience my meta/morph de-digitizing (firstness)  
and a score of ducks crying south by southwest (secondness).

Every illusion is a mouthful of smoke.  
I'm looking for a sly graveyard in the whirling feet of trees.  
Out the corner of my left eye, I will

leave nothing to burn under these cheekbones anymore.  
A cello bow breaking on a low down rust  
of mills, and I'm back to mindscape Youngstown,

thinking of Tetsudo, The Iron Man.  
In this movie a young man stares at a poster of Carl Lewis  
and slowly forces a steel pipe into his left calf.

*Over deep potholes,  
the three young girls  
appear again,  
breasts flashing  
in a blue pickup bed;  
their cones have become  
party hats, vanilla dripping  
down each forehead.*

*In union, two boys reach  
into side-pockets groping  
for 8-ball lighters.*

Where do the white blossoms hide my body?  
I was so young when I stared at that poster of Carl Lewis,  
imagined a *Steel & Tube Co.* pipe smoking out my left calf.

*From top of the rough,  
two old men swing  
for the mills.  
One pitches buckeyes  
as the other whiffs  
with his cane.  
The bases are loaded  
with hardhats,  
cropping their souls.  
After three strikes,  
the smokestacks  
turn back into treelines,  
and both men lumber  
through sprinklers  
into the sun.*

And I rise from this sandtrap believing I am cyber-real.  
My torso in-line with parking lot of the clubhouse.  
I face my destination, Hitchcock Woods, and illness

fades to circuitry as I touch earth again,  
my lucky buckeye again. Dehydrated, almost cramping, I mix  
it up, change the tape, Al Di Meola – energy gremlin

with balls to the canopy wall guitar. I burst  
into a sprint on *Kiss My Axe*, passing roller bladers,  
biker gang children and power walkers.

Solo time ; I'm speeding off the map  
into the whole system like Lilith touring Eden—

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*Bears Den, Old Furnace, West Glacier,*

*Milton Avenue* to the ghetto, and then I'm back  
(past this urban assault serenade) to the lily pad people  
and those Newports are catching up to me.

*Pause and rewind* ; I blur  
into the consciousness of a pine grove,  
hide in the shadows, and try to catch my breath.

I watch everyone I passed, pass me.  
There's almost humility in the way I stare at their planned,  
methodical motions, dissolving my feet in desolate castles

and longing after bike pedals,  
that reflect sunlight into distant diamonds,  
turning to pavement and dust.

end { OdeToMyAvatarPascal } .