

JOHN FINDURA

DRIVING THE LINCOLN TUNNEL

1.

As the final cars weave from the left lane into the right barreling towards Weehawken where Burr and Hamilton dueled and old Saint Hoboken where Sinatra was born I stay steady – steady – and gently curve along until the trees give way and the skyscrapers of Manhattan grow to my left reflecting off of the Hudson and lighting the restaurants along the river banks until I'm facing the cliffs with their condominiums and apartments and billboards proclaiming that I could hear you if I so choose, and indeed I have.

2.

The portals sit like open eyes, watching patiently as stone will often do, as patiently as our uniformed finest do while gazing through the windows of every other car, at every other driver, and I watch them too, starting in Rutherford at times, trying to perceive their fear or their purpose or what they might be hiding and how much and where and when the time might be right, but that must be washed out of the head otherwise the muscles fail to respond and common sense strikes the chest like a blast of heat, forcing the breath out.

3.

For eight thousand and six feet I hold my breath while seventy five thousand tons of dark water are supported thirteen feet above my head and the fact that this was the first major tunnel to be constructed without a fatality does little to relieve the strain, the worst part being the blue line drawn down the side of the wall showing where New Jersey

ends and New York begins, but then I think of the hydraulic engineer being pushed by his feet through a small hole to shake hands with the crew who were digging from the other side.

4.

The ears of the workmen would pop as each section was pressurized until it matched the adjoining lock, then they could proceed and everything was repeated until they reached the forward end where they had to work quickly before the pressure caused shortness of breath and dizziness, the brain starting to make the laws of physics and God bend to its own whims, but these men worked one hour days, half in the morning and half in the evening to make sure there were no mistakes, because mistakes here are erased by water, and erased well.

5.

The helix is far behind me as the lights brighten and air clears itself like an exhalation, this is what it is like when the syringe pumps into the vein, no turning back, straight on to the heart and the brain until we are lost to everything except the holy body, and we fall further south, away from the spires and glass, away from the brain and heart and directly to the soul resting gently with eyes half closed and a thin blanket pulled up around the neck until we are there and the blanket lifts and invites us in to gather in this holiest circle of warmth and love and deep, deep thought.