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Poems

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Poems

Abstract
Four photographs

Tutorial
Judith Rodriguez

FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

Snaps of the forties, hopefully taken by mothers mostly, waited for, pored over past hope. Here's the three of them, out by the back stairs with the pedigreed cockers. Young rips. Well, maybe not him, plenty there though, all day covering paper with music. Kept him out of mischief. Fine boys ... or this: a half-dozen sepia gum-trees, the door-open Chev, and picnic-rugs, Dad standing straight, sockless nine-year-old flirting a brooch, and the stolid small brother, mother-neat, in the hand-knitted jumpers of wartime. (Taught drill after lunch, and never to ride on running-boards.)

These other forties, dismay pinches. Who are these failures fronting up to stares? Which end of a camera are the half-frank young getting their fun now? What's he scared of? What's she hiding?
It's all there, like reading
the pained style
of the nib-taught dawn-of-time
Just War,
gone down in a slither
of automatic gears,
obsolescence and ball-points.
— They're still in there, wary, fighting.

TUTORIAL

Let's be frank: duplicity's fun.
Small outlay and moderate exertion.
It's addictive, mind you, with hidden
expense when you expand operations.
At the end of a short course in duplicity
you try the whopper — they all do —
suddenly you're driving four-in-hand
with three at least gone over the cliff.
Well, I ask you, what did you want,
integrity or experience? Skill's
one thing and success is another.
Learn from failures! that old chestnut —
keep succeeding or you won't be around
to be skilful. Alternatively
you won't have anything left
to be skilful about. Hang on
to your seat, hang on to your investment,
and with any hands left over
hang on. (Let go of the rest
when anything you grab answers.
Remember most of you are losers.
Winners can throw away the course-notes.)