

## William Heyen

### BEAUTIFUL MARIA

Jose Porko hit home runs in his first two at-bats  
in the World Baseball Classic, then got helmeted.  
Dugouts emptied, a few players got upended,  
but it was all in fact just a wrestling match  
until Miguel Ortiz stomped his spikes down hard  
on Porko's temple. A cop phalanx got  
Porko's body off the field, fans rioted in the stands

even before knowing the Venezuelan first baseman was dead,  
& then, when they heard, burned down stadium & city.  
The corporations considered canceling the Classic for a few years,  
or perhaps two, or at least one, but then settled  
on required seminars for umpires who must learn,  
a spokesman said, "to anticipate, and defuse,  
problematic situations." There on the teletron

coalesced Porko's grieving widow, red rose in her ebon hair,  
drawing her shawl tight round her, praying for calm, for  
forgiveness for Miguel, in English, then Spanish, then tongues.  
His spirit, she said, demanded strength from her,  
& for the Classic to continue. We knew that she would be  
properly compensated, but in our memory  
Maria is a saint, her every breath sincere, & earned.

### *CODA*

Two seasons later, Maria & Miguel were married  
within that chapel where Porko had been eulogized.

SHABAZZ

St. John of the Cross, his “Cloud of Unknowing,”  
sings chords of mystical godhead,  
thus Shabazz was listening to the audio  
before that last game against Moscow.

The words, half understood—Russian  
was not his native language—soothed him.  
Yes, we are consoled that St. John  
comforted Shabazz before his final competition.

What else was in his zPod, if anything,  
we’ve no way of knowing unless  
the corporation’s lawyers release this information  
which is far from likely unless

there is strong torque from the oval office  
which is loath to interfere despite rumors  
that the President was at the arena  
when Shabazz stood under the goal posts

like a god, no, like a humble disciple  
prepared to receive the day’s verdict of victory  
or death. Now, praising him, some of us  
do not picture his fractures or stigmata

that circled the world in those next hours, but  
Shabazz hunched over in front of his locker  
listening to divine presence, arming himself  
for the only struggle that matters.

THE WARRIOR

If you want to know what it sounded like  
when his neck broke,  
snap a wooden popsickle stick,

or, if you're living in the future when everything is plastic  
& the ice cream corporation flash-freezes its plastic  
vellumilla & plastic chocomarrow & plastic

bloodberry around a logo-wand of edible plastic,  
just ask Cassandra, who was there with me, to crack  
her knuckles, as she often does these days

even though her hands are swollen....

There! Did you hear it? The poor bastard  
got hit so hard that we winced & figured  
he'd been translated into the Great Beyond,

but rumor is that he'll survive. Any chance  
you'll walk Cass across the compound to her place?—  
she's got welcome-girl duty for the weekend,

& I'm crucial at the heliport right now  
where the bosses are coptering in below  
rogue clouds that are threatening to explode.

THE FOOTBALL CORPORATIONS

First we saw just his helmet  
roll out from the vicious gang-hit,  
then realized that his head was still in it,

good old #44, now a gusher  
who'd seldom spoken to fans before  
or been injured except for when his supplier

knifed him, a superficial wound, that rib-scar  
he'd strum while sneering at reporters.  
Anyway, when the stretcher-bearers

ran out onto the field, they couldn't figure whether  
to load up #44's head, or body, or both together.  
I swear I don't laugh much these years,

nobody does, but for a time-out we forgot  
which city would be bombed if their team lost,  
which country would be forced to transport

2.5 million of its children for slave labor & food  
to the other. I heard today that the blood-sod  
broke records on eBay, a square inch for a hundred grand.

*CODA*

#44 was cremated, except for his head,  
now encased in lucite at the Hall of Fame.  
Visitor, straightarm your way to gain a look at him.  
He'll glare into your future like a god.

AFTER THE GAME, 2049

That famous photo of Typhoon with his head  
between his knees with the flashback sun  
from the mirror behind him—it must have been  
a sun exploding in his brain at that millisecond  
before he fell forward to block the carpet

& lay dead while the corporation publicists  
ushered in more media for what they needed  
to spin their message that Typhoon,  
a role model, had continued to play hard  
despite concussions in the first & second quarters

& in overtime—that famous shot, what a shame  
Typhoon couldn't live to sign a thousand photos,  
right across that sun, seven letters  
that might have brought at least seven figures  
for each of his several widows.