Eric Wayne Dickey: Poem [1]

March 19, 2014   Honoring Rukeyser [2]

Going to D.C.

I.

A child lies on a driveway,
a red clay dirt driveway,
face down in a puddle.

Rain and more rain coming,
the puddle fills fast.
Where are his parents?

I yell at the kid to get up.
He doesn't move.
I pull him up by his shirt.

When I do, another two kids
appear face down in the water.
I am the lifeguard of the puddles.

II.

I run along a crowded platform
trying to stop kids from falling
into the paths of trains.

Adults sip coffee and smoke
while waiting for the 8:15.
I duck down to reach through their legs,

grabbing their kids
before they fall. More kids
running. My hands are full,

I am trapped. I yell for help
but I can only blurt, "All aboard."
I am the conductor of the platform.

III.

Kids on a field trip climbing tanks
and jeeps like jungle gyms
at the Capitol Building.

Parents smile and take pictures
of soldiers standing guard
like headstones in a graveyard.

I pluck children like apples
before they fall from the turrets
and tuck them into my pockets.

The troops start pointing at me.
I am not afraid. Brazen,
I am a thief in their orchard.

Art Information

- "Puddle Jump [3]" © JulesInKY; morgueFile license

Eric Wayne Dickey's poetry has appeared in Talking Writing [4], *Rhino, West Wind Review*, and *International Poetry Review*. He's received a grant from the John Anson Kittredge Fund and is a Vermont Studio Center Fellow. He coedits *Pacifica: Poetry International*. His publications include a chapbook, The Hardy Boy Poems [5] (Beard of Bees Press, 2013), and a selection of Twitter poems, Forgive Me, Tiny Robots [6] (Argotist Online, 2013).

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o),
m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-
analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

Eric notes that "Going to D.C" was inspired by the word "escapement," used in fisheries to describe salmon that don't get caught or killed and by the military to account for unrealized recruits. It was also sparked by seeing the title passage in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* as an antiwar metaphor:

> I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them.

Eric lives in Corvallis, Oregon. He has entered a daily tweet of exactly 140 characters since June 2009; you can follow him at @MePoet [7].

The photo of Eric is by Jana Svoboda.

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