

George

Lee Robison

He speaks in a poetry of mumbles, not quite rambling
under the breaking sky about what happened
half his life ago and the end of a promise
that makes him angry. Shows the confusion
of skin and hair the Cong shrapnel left
above the cracked china eye that never seems
to find a focus, always askew as if
it had learned a wariness of heaven.

He'd studied languages at Michigan. Blessed with eight
before whatever gouged that tangled crease
in his hair stole seven and an eye and nine years
from the order of memory, and a generation later
he has stopped a stranger of his generation to pass
the time, to ask his name and say it looks
like rain, to show a scar and say that a loss
he knows but cannot recall makes him angry,

to ask my name and say he has what he has
to get what he can out of life, and it looks
like rain. And I nearly cannot hinder
my hand from touching that mend, like the need to prick
thumb on a martyr's crown. Yet no martyr,
only two men who had lived different ways
that distant year, and who stand under
collapsing gray exchanging names.