

A Song
After John White

1.
There are no bootstraps in this picture.
No ladders to the sky. Only a patchwork
Building climbing towards
Nothing. Here the sky isn't endless.
It is gray and diaphanous, dense like vaporous
Glass. Outside the frame, eagles circle,
Or so one would imagine. Naïve
Of the bird's tinkling cries and their own
Status as prey, the children dance
Towards their audience, tongue-first.

2.
Of course, the eagle and skies
Are imagined. Of course, so were the shoes.
Of course, I read past the black
And white lined shadows limping across
The grass.

3.
The photograph's voice is higher pitched
Than one might expect. I hear the children
Laugh long after I have left the museum.

4.
The glasses were a gift.
(The ones I used to read
The picture).
The limber frame too.
(The one I used to hang
It in my heart).

5.
The frame threatens to burst
Me open, to split my chest wide
Right at the seams.

I did not believe there was room enough
To carry all this laughter.
But God gifted it to me.

In this ekphrastic poem, I analyze a photograph taken by John White (and pasted onto the next page). As a member of the Church, my beliefs in the dignity and worth of souls no matter their race, religion, creed, social class, gender, sexuality, etc. encourages me to advocate for laws and policies that contribute towards greater justice for all men. As a student of the humanities, my professors have given me various gifts to better understand the life experiences of various people. These include theories, methods of analysis, and so much more. Together, my religion and my college help me to see deeper behind any piece of photography, writing, music, or any other piece of art to better understand the people and emotions displayed, what factors led to the decisions they are making, and how that connects to the ways I promote a more just world.

