

Day after the Las Vegas Shooting

I've been driving alone past cornfields and the rolling hills of Ohio all week. I'm trying to write about the 2000 year-old geometric earthworks built along tributaries of the Ohio River by a people we call the Hopewell but whose real name we don't know. But today I'm back in Columbus. All I want to do is have my first decent breakfast in days and get centered. I settle in by a window of the Briosio Café with my copy of the Columbus Dispatch. There is something about a shooting on the front page, but it's not the first thing I want to read so I skip to Page 3. I finish my coffee and huevos then head to the Columbus Metropolitan Library. There must be 100 people working on laptops or cell phones—seniors, young people looking up jobs or apartments, and grad students getting ready for seminars. Some are here for the free WI-FI. I like the click and hum of it.

I settle in facing the floor-to-ceiling window filled by a park and the white, 21 story office tower next door. There have been flags everywhere in the small towns I have driven through and even some yellow ribbons. But the flag on top of the insurance building is lowered to half-mast. It droops against the pole. At first I think a soldier has died in Iraq. Yesterday was October 1. It takes me the rest of the day to find out that while I was making my way home last night, getting a meal in my room, and pouring a drink before bed, a gunman was firing eleven hundred rounds into a crowd at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas. No one I've met today has said anything about it. It's hard to decode the silence.

Guns in so many houses. Over
the Motorists Insurance Building, the first
flag I've seen today, half-mast
and failing. Me with no TV, guessing

Iraq. I skipped the Dispatch's
front page: *Shooter in Vegas.* Didn't
like that so I turned to Page 3.
Two death penalties, a notice
of appeals, retrial denied.

Why ask a killer who wants
to live after all, or the aproned
young man stirring my latte in
the Library café as light
floods the books: what's left
when coverage teaches
the next person how, that useful
narrative of frustrated entitlement
and valorized grievance.
It's simply the math.
Murder, the new norm.

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Written from Columbus, Ohio. October 2, 2017