

## On Heroism

Tolstoy's portrayal of history  
was like a dream come true,  
no individual in control of what happens,  
each man monumentally effaced.

And then there was Mark Strand  
telling us in a Hilton bar  
that he preferred to make the self happen  
“in the language of the poem”  
instead of basing it on personal history,  
a singular past. We perfectly understood.

We were psalmists at heart,  
ready with ornate praise or lamentation,  
but we would never look as ridiculous as Napoleon  
pacing and waiting  
by the Kamerkollezhsky rampart  
for a deputation that would never show.

Our poems would be deep water.  
Our father would be forgotten.  
Our mother and brother too.  
Our song was made of a silence only we heard.

*Todd Copeland's poems have appeared in The Journal, High Plains Literary Review, Southern Poetry Review, The Wallace Stevens Journal, The Adirondack Review, Sewanee Theological Review, The Antigonish Review, and Columbia Poetry Review, among other publications. He lives in Waco, Texas.*

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