

City Living

Interesting. I'm no veteran, but I understand loss –
of freedom, a patched roof, mandolins consoling

Italians, their turf encroached upon by the Chinese.
Before this city was a flood, I was the stickball

hero laughing unhindered through embarrassing
tenements, a mason jar of promises exploding in

my face. I'd inhaled this ghetto one too many times.
The plague of hopelessness hurts less than machine

gun symphonies kids learn to play in their sleep.
How often I've dreamed of corporate men lighting

fires with sticks in the everglades, their fat bellies
rumbling louder than neglect. Hunger's for real.

I have nothing left but pain. Forgive me, father,
for I have grinned, amused in forgetting my fate.

I've since expanded past normal, soon to be a
scarlet balloon bursting in space, difficult to cure.



Robin Ray is the author of *Wetland and Other Stories* (All Things That Matter Press, 2013), *Obey the Darkness: Horror Stories*, the novels *Murder in Rock & Roll Heaven* and *Commoner the Vagabond*, and one book of non-fiction, *You Can't Sleep Here: A Clown's Guide to Surviving Homelessness*. His works have appeared at Delphinium, Bangalore, Squawk Back, Outsider, Red Fez, Jerry Jazz Musician, Underwood Press, Scarlet Leaf, Neologism, Spark, Aphelion, Vita Brevis, and elsewhere.

