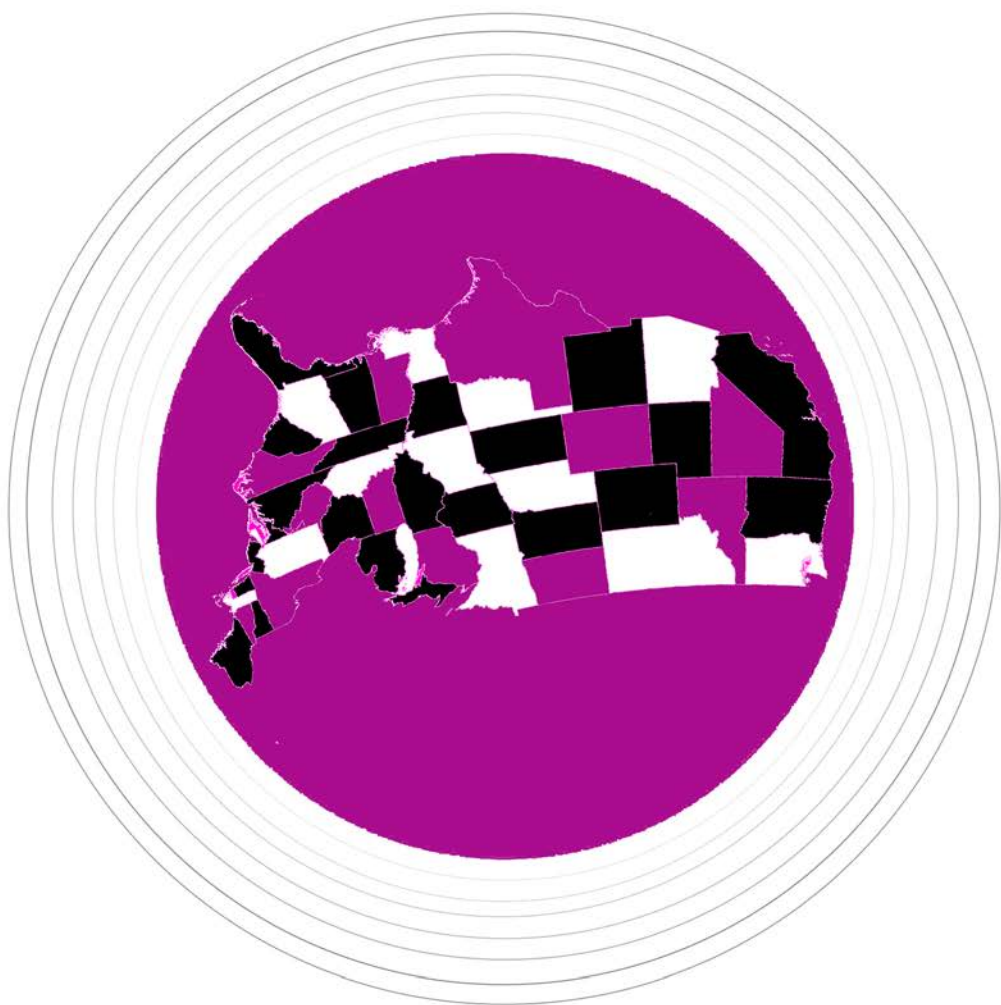


SEVENTEEN GRAVEYARDS: HISTORIES/ DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME U.S. STATES

MATHIAS SVALINA





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#76

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INTRODUCTION

America confuses me. I wrote a manuscript called GRAVEYARD GRAVEYARD GRAVEYARD GRAVEYARD to contain some of this confusion. It consists of histories/descriptions of all 88 states of America. This chapbook is comprised of 17 of those histories/descriptions.



**SEVEN
TEEN**

**GRAVE
YARDS**

GEORGIA

What goes up returns as the weaker deal & you grab dad's cheeks & ride his body down the creek. You break a few ribs. You save the date. Lick sweet fishblood off the sun-hot grate. A mouthful of Georgia tastes like an entire meal. And yeah, I feel you, I feel your personal appeal. History is difficult in this ziggurat of dogs, each moment falling from a littler, lower, & smaller shelf. But what makes me suffer in Georgia is an old dress hung on a doorknob: it's enough to make one refuse to believe in anything in which one can believe. It's the need for a mirror to cloud with one's breath, & I can't even name a tree. What is this tree? Its leaves look like peach leaves & each year it produces peaches, but travelling from Atlanta to Athens one can meet a perfect dimebag of nothing. There's no Georgia after you're gone. There's nothing but the empty bag. There's nothing like a pricetag. They should change the name of where you live when you are no longer there.



HAWAII

In Hawaii light brocades the eyes when the smoke from a carfire is particularly thick & one can see a few birds, so black no single feather or beak or eye can be distinguished from another, detach from the smoke & fly back to the hot tar parking lot out of which they were born. Trees don't grow in Hawaii, they tear italics from the earth. Is that semantic? Someone I loved briefly briefly lived in Hawaii. But that's a story I find impossible to tell. Someone you loved lived in or will live in Hawaii. That's the inevitable fact of blue. And all of Hawaii, even the burning parts, are blue. Sometimes blue makes sense, sometimes blue will teach you everything you need to escape, but sometimes blue is a curious number, & always blue aches.



IDAHO

You will die in an archive. You will die in Idaho. You will die holding a necklace or something like, a tooth, or a bottle of bleach, a VHS tape still sealed in the factory plastic. You will sleep on a floor beside other people sleeping on the floor while that Cure song they insisted did not exist plays along to your lucid dreams of *Murder She Wrote*. In Idaho you can touch things unseen. You can touch a dam & feel all water. Touch a motel & feel every sleepiness. Touch every part of Idaho. Speak in Spanish & then speak in Yoruba & then speak in Tagalong & then speak into a jar of figs & find out how the Bible Aunt Peggy gave you when you were little, a red ribbon sewn into its spine, only speaks now for itself. Sew a new bone into your new spine when the sky drains twilight into panting dogs & open car-doors sitting in the driveway with the lights on, an alarm dinging real real loud. A web of a large state & a small state & wish & limit: this will be the Idaho to die.



ILLINOIS

The walls of Illinois are spoil-colored, mutability, pun-stunted wifi network names, & what affects me most is that sense of space only nothingness allows, how sex in Illinois is like removing clothes from a Ken doll, how to be in Illinois is like that *ah-ha* of understanding the first of June for the first time near a small man with a small hole in his large hand. You can always see those farmers trapped beneath their horses. In Illinois every work of art gets stolen or chopped for kindling & one would see the fire of burning art from outer space if there were anything above the dirt. Groped-out heroes on careful horses, crowd control for the bakesale: Illinois puts its sad mouth on the sad skin of your sad wrist & what results is a farm or a racist uncle & forevermore there's a hot goat outside the window, laughing like a Bogdanovich, periwinkle issuing from the mouth of Cloris.

ILLINOIS

It is a place for the dead. A place for the dead to invent new words. Where the dead can sit on a blue bench & think of someone they used to know, someone whose last name they can't recall & therefore can't google. I'd like to give everyone in Illinois a second chance. But that's not my job. I'm the nephrologist of the dead & dying & unwilling to die. Your job while you're alive in Illinois is to listen, then after you're dead to speak.

INDIANA

In regards to my vCard the v stands for Indiana & for forgiveness. I am landless but I feel things when the soundtrack instructs. In Indiana we love the creep of the deep house & we love our federal prison & we turn the other cheek. We cry at matins & we cry when *Home Improvement* plays in syndication. These are dark times & rocketry. Lay your ear down on what was. No one stands against evil in Indiana. They merely check the walls for scars to reveal secret doors. They watch foxes unfold into Xboxes. The rivers freeze over & children lust after zeros & gold coins. It's tough with all these hanged men dancing in the streets, weeping willows & scarfuckers. We kill for Jesus & we kill for Bikini Kill. Our lives are now a lifetime ago. And then one year later everything changes.



IOWA

In Iowa one can never not tell the entire story of every experience & each pore is a larynx, each pulse a frigate. No one can stop telling their experiences long enough to compare *go to town* against *go into town* & also there are no towns. In Iowa space is not filled with matter. Near & far digitize like a year after the year has ended & morning haunts a highway's trickle into soybean. Each instrument in Iowa makes all its noises all the time in one vast howl with the sound of the mall's automatic doors opening & closing though no one is there. It is a plexiglass economy of see-through tectonics, a cougarcamp of Wu Tangs & each Iowan is an instrument. But then, eventually, some recognizable thing emerges that could be referred to as a heartbeat or as the hole made by not being, never needing weft or CCTV, or as the flotsam of democracy, or the emetic infuriation of the organs' little bodies within the body, if only anyone could stop telling & be bothered to hear. Iowa of microscopes, of property facades, has been beating for two-point-five billion years.



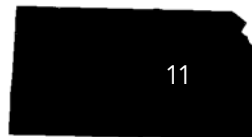
JEGGING

When the monster cut his father's genitals off & flung the genitals & the blade into the sea what emerged from the foam is the state of Jegging, also known as Jort, also known as the False-Start State, a golden eagle tearing apart a fawn, a leather belt cinched around a dead treetrunk. And in Jegging the resonance of the lowest piano string is coincident with the resonance of a stabwound. Jegging makes irrelevant also the individual. Even as the genitals disappear into the sea, even as the sea is closed for public-safety purposes, in all that blood & foam anything could happen. But instead something happens.



KANSAS

Like that fat-fold at the back of the neck, that turn of truth into a wandering tongue. Timber shivers old ways below the streets & a popcorn shop on Main won't make you or not make you what the guidebooks say you are. Kansas like a clod of warblers, a cloud of wooden fences comprised of boys, boys, boys, & boys, but only silence can cure decay. Kansas likes the liking of ducks, the use of sutures to the trepanned truth. Kansas likes the diphthong mouthful, piano in the background like the first-person plural, hard scrabble made less meaningful with usage. No Kansas but in an order of wings. No Kansas but at 3 PM. They steal your dreams in capital letters. They pencil in the uterus. They keep the cardboard box & never plug in the refrigerator. Kansas like a country Carthage, left behind by conflict.



KENTUCKY

A state is a thing only known in reverse, like Eazy-E, like the Hadron Collider. The coldest thing in the universe, for example, is in a lab in Kentucky. And most people, when they picture a cold thing, picture a crash. Most people, when they picture their minds, picture a stage on which masked actors pantomime emotions & ideas with knives. Anonymity is a pleasing dream but once you're from some where you are some thing. You are from Kentucky & you have a name & you own at least one thing & some thing loves you. Have you ever said of a beer or a film *I love that beer* or *I love that film* & does this make you sad & if not, why not? No sentence is a human thing, but neither ever is a human thing.

LANDSCAPE

Go down to Gorky Park. Listen to the winds of change. Listen to an exhaust fan blowing on a permeable bod. Landscape controls imagination like Anna Karenina bombing that train where every body is a potable thing. One can pivot or hire a carpenter. One can rudder a wondrous becoming. The space behind your eyeballs is a shackled darkroom when your eyes close. Landscape is speedy & simultaneous. Motion is dumb—it's like stillness. It is a concept built of bear pelt, but never enough bear pelt. Buoys get bigger, aphorisms less & less whittle-able, everything flappably montage-able, Montell Jordan-able. Bowl of soup, dead child, do the twist: to indicate when I'm reading a quote I'll hold up these two severed hands. The internet is a landscape but so is your other, deeper mother.

LILY

In Lily a hippo is hiding in a Frosty, a Frosty from Wendy's. Live birds there ladle out the summer by skimpier & skimpier degrees, though someone might tell on you if you cheat. In love with the shame of a name, in Lily we're still learning forgivenesses. In Lily we're all sour patch children dropped into a jar of rainwater, eight bits of eggshell in a bowl of grape nuts, a model of bad faith. I am trying to pick a flower from a grabbag of ticks, tickling myself to sleep, scrappling curses into a well-wrought urn, pressing needles into my door. Lily does not fade away. Lily cannot tell you where Lily ends.



LISA SEA

The Lisa Sea consists of all the fishes in the sea. Fishes do not organize gracefully—organization dentures one's delusions in favor of a public delusion. Fishes do not do this well. They do not do this at all. Fishes enjoy imagining a world in which words like gitals, exhaywhe, ablegos, or chnopoulos are real words. And therefore fishes require us to bring democracy to The Lisa Sea. Despite lacking pragmatic use, The Lisa Sea is needed. It's like how every car, plane or helicopter is required by law to install a self-destruct button where the driver or pilot always sees it. It's like the navel, how it never chooses.



LOUISIANA

This is the origin of Louisiana: there were four musical notes. They lived together in an old Victorian down the way. The townspeople hated them & burned them alive. When the townspeople burned them alive the notes did not die. They kept being music throughout all the pain. But the origin story makes no sense: no one invented a note. None control it. There is nothing to know. But when you hear a note as it is burning alive you split in two: one you is the you sitting where you are sitting, the other you the you sitting near you, maybe at the table's end. This is why we love music: it makes you sit with you, beautiful & vomitous as hair. It is rare to be strong enough & humble enough to hold onto beauty, to sit with beauty & not fuck it up, to understand beauty & love & stupidity & to drool & to seep & to fold oneself into a burning kite & to not fuck this up. It is rare to find something that is both jagged & smooth.



MAINE

A strange thing happened to Maine today. Maine was driving by the park by the church & saw a yellow '70s Volvo. This reminded Maine of her friend Ben's Volvo. Thinking of Ben made Maine think of when Ben was last in town & Maine met Ben's friend Elaine. Elaine & Maine became facebook friends. Then, right at that moment when Maine was thinking about this friend of Ben's named Elaine, guess who walked by on the sidewalk? Yes, that very same Elaine. This story is not a good story. But turn the volume up. Up so loud the floorboards resonate when the hard a of Maine & Elaine hit. Then you begin to know the real story of Maine.



MASSACRE

Massacre began as a contract but no one would sign it & then there was blood on every part of everybody's bodies & still blood was the signature. It's been centuries since the massacre & despite rain & floods no one knows this land as anything but Massacre & a massacre. But also there is you with your theories & me with my cracktorch, singing *Look at me / I can be / centerfield* as we drive by the moonlit dunes. I like your small false front. I like what you mean. Sometimes I can even forget Massacre's contract, but never always. What does it mean to have a cock when there is no *you*? When I look in the mirror I see a Cinnabon, but it is, I know, a Cinnabon of blood. I am always wearing my costume of Massacre—it is my costume of cock. Is it too much to ask you to validate my ticket? Too much to ask for a positive ID? I like you like that, made of glass, making semen enough to drown all the teachers. I have to run for Congress now, but after that we should talk. I'd like for you to make of me a uniquely meeker me.

MINNESOTA

There is so much other stuff in Minnesota that the stuff itself gets overlooked. Then residents return & take their clothes off & their bodies are x-rays of their bodies. There's no geology in Minnesota, no parking lots, only headshots & ferrier promises. The best thing to do in Minnesota is to open a door. And after that the only thing left to do in Minnesota is to open another door.

AUTHOR BIO

Mathias Svalina is the author of five books, most recently *The Wine-Dark Sea* from Sidebrow Books. He is an editor for [Octopus Books](#) and runs the [Dream Delivery Service](#).



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