

BOOMERANG

He went West, the way others had, to leave the things he didn't like behind him. He was going away, rather than arriving. Then he arrived. He was in Japan.

Did he miss familiar things, how could he, if he welcomed their absence. Here were people who had never met him, who could not possibly know him. What could they expect from him. They had a way of life of their own to defend. Let him inspire their curiosity, while they inspired his. How could he defend or attack what he did not know. He would refrain. Peace, brother.

To these people, though, his purpose was hard to discern. Unremittingly they asked, was he a student, did he live in a boarding house, was he working part time. They were asking the questions they asked of young men, so as to know their business, if they had any. A young man had to have business, obviously.

And a young woman, obviously, had better not. Look at one, as if to say, what is your business, and they giggled, ashamed, looking to one another, dying of the shame but having to keep giggling, out of desperation. He giggled back sometimes, because what his own business was, tee hee, he was as hardpressed to say, but they dared not seem to be giggling with him, these women, but only at things, at obvious objects, to keep this unanimous, anonymous. Sharing laughter with him, sharing anything, would have terrified them. Tears came to their frantic eyes, even chortling about him to one another, in his presence, on a train.

He would look away, finally, one hand gripping the hand-ring, the other on his bicep, to keep him balanced, as the train rolled, and the girls fell in together, in whispers, to discuss their shock, that he should have gazed into their orbit, with his blue eyes.

Whenever the doors opened, elders rushed in after seats. Having ensconced themselves, they would take him in, perceive the proximity of the young women, and frown. That did it. The girls stopped speaking to each other. Merely to have crossed his path, to have made themselves noticeable to any American, was brazen. They were ashamed of themselves.

I began to miss home.