



Michael J. Vaughan

Fields of Satchmo

The highway sparkles obsidian,
arrowhead shavings,
cities named for the slaughtered,
a country built on crushed culture.

Our Fathers, coffeehouse Athenians,
half their fortunes pressed from
negro flesh so they wrote a
government full of wishes

Filled in the blanks with six hundred
thousand soldiers then told
the vanquished they could
go on lynching niggers so
long as they were free niggers.

Dangling bodies spoil a

proper party so we paper the
walls with righteous fictions.
Jazz, for example, as a
pure African form.

Explain the pianoforte, the
Turkish cymbal, the Spanish guitar.
Treble clefs running in
great herds along the Serengeti,
grazing on quarter notes.

If you are going to
survive the American mindfuck you
must embrace the awfulness,
fall face-down in the cattleshit,
open your eyes to find
Louis Armstrong sprouting like a
sunflower, sowing the plains with
peals of brass, smiling a
smile that no one forgets.

Child of slaves.
Handel's trumpet.
Four-four time with tribal improve,
lyrics by Gershwin,
a swung note at the
tip of Jefferson's pen.

Michael J. Vaughan has published poems in *Many Mountains Moving*, *The Monserrat Review* and *Yarrow*. He took second prize at the Austin International Poetry Festival. He is also a novelist and performs as a jazz vocalist and drummer.