

# LIGHTS OUT

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Beard of Bees  
Chicago  
Number 37  
December, 2006

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## A Note on the Text

*Lights Out* is an excerpt from a book-length poem entitled *Odalisque*.

## **Extended Viewing**

Static or farfetched but nonetheless to give credence  
of a few faint images or parts where it got dicey  
Biggie set up at Petersen's and then the summer  
my elm won't leave me alone it is memory it is nothing  
I was M. late of the Miracle Mile washed up and cut down  
under authority of The Pottery Barn Rule no longer relevant  
while she became a former odalisque retired to the suburbs  
amid theatrical mementos old headshots and publicity stills  
abiding in the space that comes after everything happens  
insofar as seeming and being is always the first betrayal  
a proving ground for wan beings of opposition and derision  
they arrived like two-drink minimum poor immigrants  
pie-eyed with grief or headlong in various d-cup solutions  
caught up in the action the general crackdown of desire.

## **Some People**

Staying alive and making it through the u-shape of life  
notwithstanding being hacked up in the day-long idolatry  
to relearn credence blind preoccupation and sticking your neck out  
in lieu of simple vocabulary and right light moments  
the first betrayal is the betrayal of seduction  
her analysis was to give up and go home a retired odalisque  
therefore the movie ends on a railway platform at Union Station  
surrounded by two-drink minimum poor immigrants and breaklight  
they came to the new world to get laid  
drink wine and laugh themselves to death  
in clinics in night schools in walk-ups in day jobs  
while I was M. sacked from the bomb squad and no longer relevant  
insofar as headlong for a no-talent peroxide blonde in go-go boots  
the inconclusive other but dicey as I have scrupled to aver.

## **Pennant**

She repeated the word free she repeated the word couple-y  
to get laid they came here and with all of the problems  
notwithstanding seduction running gags and a handful of ludes  
to stay the heavy train or keep August off the dumb waiter  
foiling the plot just when modern illusionism summed up  
a crackdown on orders from the D.A. cashiered under authority  
to press for the regime of the personal little slut that I was  
in the next decade he gave up his process and became as a lost man  
insofar as the first betrayal is boobie trapped with bra logic  
pretty soon it will all be in English except in Los Angeles  
in tv light or below compass or flunking out of beauty school  
to pull back the wizardy curtain on being and believing  
the people people heaved up under trellises of air or  
beautifully loosened to leave her soul alone I was M.

## **Interview**

It ends in opposition and derision in order to be visible  
for this she drew a line around herself her I her me  
and retired out of earshot of some various muffled threnody  
to put aside a strange attraction or just forget the dream  
a former wan being who got a little roughed up in the afterglow  
pulling against her tether to make it through the u-shape of life  
and finally close a door on pedants and lettered fools  
soon it will all be in English except the noise of the heart  
or shouting oneself hoarse after that thing at Staples Center  
if only it relieves the ear and or rewards the eye if only [if if]  
in this burden of being a song and dance man gaudy patter and shtick  
the moral equivalent of bra logic given the wildcard of seduction  
and in any case backed into or out of the regime of the personal  
with both of us drawing lines around what she said and who she was.

## **In Hours**

It ends in bra logic and failed transitive devices  
just to advance from one headlong desire to another  
notwithstanding our cooped up notions of a primary system  
or tunnel vision flop sweat and shtick to save a fairy tale  
it's how we got canned under the regime of reason  
the summer after Biggie got shot I gave up my process  
because it faded me a little toward the sidelines  
I was M. no longer significant in the general crackdown  
for a no-talent peroxide blonde in go-go boots  
she was brazen as nails to give credence to the world  
insofar as cue lines amounted to the dream itself  
sticking my damn neck out for whore talk at Steve Boardner's  
and shoring up fragments like all the other poor immigrants  
or mouthing off to authority for an odalisque I was M. I was M.



## Accessory

More wan beings in panoramas of their own imaginings  
or mixing in with the breakfast crowd at Denny's on Sunset  
they came to the new world to get laid and freak out  
in right light moments sordid greed and cheap vainglory  
it was a way to be significant without recourse to the alphabet  
when the double cross of seduction presented several aspects  
a pile-on of widely held beliefs and plural identities  
hence one grateful tether to rein her in and connect her  
to the world of being under authority and castigation  
along with all the other beauty school graduates roughed up  
repeating the word free and killing time on the back seat  
pretty soon it will all be in English or muffled under the money  
the summer after I gave up my process to save a fairy tale  
another summed up light in the general crackdown of desire.

## Lights Out

A little roughed up and so mouthing off under authority  
stranded between seeming and being in fact thrown off the squad  
for a no-talent peroxide blonde in go-go boots as occurs  
in the next decade of his life he becomes no longer significant  
wondering what's left of our lungs and the brightly colored air  
she repeated the word free and told her soul to shut up  
on faint scenes of life and numerous assorted fragments  
while my part was cut down to a few lines at the end  
from a synopsis that could have been found in the back pages of *Tiger Beat*  
Barney's Beanery Duke's The Power House The Side Show El Carmen  
flunky cops beauty school graduates despised scriveners and seduction  
on mile-high heels tits out to here and a small-town history  
insofar as being famous was an end in itself  
notwithstanding stupid mistakes and the fall back position of blind preoccupation.

## Lie to Me

It amounted to a salvage job but there you're on your own  
in twilight a few paces behind the bigshots at Fred Segal  
memory that just has to jackhammer your brain for a while  
as you wonder if you could ever be relevant again  
suppose I didn't care anymore about her hands or what she said  
as though she were just another dumb odalisque on Hollywood Blvd.  
new in town and working from a Polish blueprint and mistakes  
to be the one who knows versus the one who learns as occurs  
when the idolatry of reason got cashiered for fame itself  
and the concomitant h.p. demands cue lines and a handful of ludes  
it got headlong living below compass to shout oneself hoarse  
like two-drink minimum poor immigrants and pie-eyed to be here  
until one day it all blows up in your face  
I was M. I was the hero this is my story.

## **Trouble No More**

When thinking of his feelings he imagined it as carefree  
having relearned risk management on the roof of Hollywood High  
because he thought the years of tv light and reason were behind him  
he went his own way and took his lumps for it end of story  
in the movie the renegade cop resists the system and does good  
by transforming the figurative and shoring up useless fragments  
he was just seeing himself as unlucky he was playing the sap  
if you step over the line once you get smacked you get canned  
or sometimes you just find yourself over the line  
he thought of himself as below compass and good to go  
notwithstanding several aspects simultaneously and a lead pipe logic  
immigrants beauty school graduates scribes and the like  
sentenced under The Pottery Barn Rule and mouthing off to authority  
long after the point of speaking slowly and simple vocabulary.

MARK SALERNO is the author, most recently, of *So One Could Have* (Red Hen Press). His book *Method* (The Figures) was a Finalist in the National Poetry Series. He is the recipient of a Fund for Poetry grant. The works in *Lights Out* are from a book-length poem entitled *Odalisque*, forthcoming from Salt Publishing in 2007.

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