

Black Mountain College

MUSEUM  ARTS CENTER

Disciple

Joseph Bathanti

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Disciple

“... most everything I have ever learned, including
how to write, I picked up at Black Mountain College
...”

■ Michael Rumaker

Early June 1952 –
McCarthy amok –
Michael Rumaker, nee *Romejko*,

apostate Catholic,
South Philly exile, queer,
on the lam, in search of sanctuary,

breaches the Continental Divide
at the climax of Old Fort Mountain.
Counties McDowell and Buncombe

marry in dawn rime. Black bears
roam red spruce and Fraser Fir.
Wildcats cry. At such altitude,

blossoms fruit late on the cane.
Frost whispers. Clouds mass.
Michael divines omen

in the beckoning: Blue Ridge,
Black Mountain Range,
beyond a billion years extant –

the place he's glimpsed but in visions.
He travels State Street into the village,
somehow finds, by sheer desire,

secreted off Hwy. 70,
the scarred macadam:
nameless save for numbers on a stob,

queued with ancient split rail, Levitical
hardwoods, columbine, turkey beard,
may-apple, fire pink – rainforest lush.

A stranger, toting his pittance,
bundle and traps, he yearns to scaven:
In the beginning was the word ...

Through the gate, he crosses
the baseball diamond.
The last of its dandelions

gone white sway.
By the Round House,
then to the Quiet House

where he genuflects,
absolved in the ether.
Across Lake Eden, shrouded

in mist, glitters the Studies Building.
Upon its pylons,
Charlot's murals bide oracular.

Michael shields his eyes, evangelized.
The Seven Sisters drape
in morning-blue shawls.

■ Joseph Bathanti