

First Light Fielding

Joseph Bathanti

(for Fielding Dawson)

He arrived, first light,
April, on the Crescent
from Cooperstown –
teaching convicts to write.
The moon swayed from sight.
The Purina factory
on Tryon Street –
checkerboard logo,
nine red and white
oxidized squares
on the spuming brick stack –
licked into relief.
Guard dogs penned
in the scrap lot barked.
Two girls on the curb
shared a pretty box
of Bojangles. North Charlotte:
where newborns cross
the dead at the station,
and dark johns stagger blocks
of grease and concertina
between the Queen City
and university.
Rails keened, then sighed exhaust.
Fielding appeared on the platform.
His shock of white hair fluttered
in the Good Friday dawn,
a pink *Teach Peace* button
pinned to his black lapel.
Above him hovered green
a luna moth.

■ Joseph Bathanti