

Catalyst

for Kat Gold

She'd stepped out from work
for a cigarette for a minute;
later she said she could see
bum a smoke register in his eyes
as he crossed Westminster;

she was ready to give him one.
But when he got to her, after he
stared at the sidewalk to her right
gearing up to make a second
of eye contact and make his say,

he looked her in the eye and stopped
cold and, she said later, it was like
the veil had lifted from his face,
and he told her she was beautiful,
and he told her he had forgotten

what he wanted to ask her for,
and she told him he probably
wanted a smoke and he said yes,
that's what it was,
and he told her she reminded him

of his cousin and though she'd heard this
or something like it from men
ten thousand times before, this time she knew
it wasn't a line
and he began to say what good times

he and his cousin had had
and inside him what must have happened was
Can I have a smoke and then She is so beautiful
and then It's Laura!
and then But Laura's gone

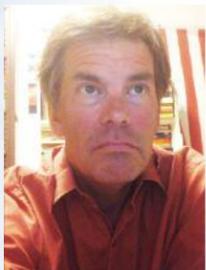
but it looks like her she looks like her
and then he was embarrassed,
and so as not to stare he looked
past her into the shop window full of summer
clothes, green and pale blue and gossamer,

and he remembered that it was some
kind of love that had brought him into the world,
and for an instant everything around him
reminded him of some old story
he had heard years and years ago

and forgotten, or some old song,
or his first good drunk,
and then it was time to go,
to not bother her. He thanked her,
he turned away, and the veil began to rise

because where we are it must, but
it was not quite so high as it was before
and would not be again. He thought
he must try to find another member of his family.
Smoke rose toward the early evening sky.

Randy Cauthen



Randy Cauthen is Poet in Residence and Associate Professor of English at Cal State, Dominguez Hills. He has also worked as a horse-drawn carriage driver, First Mate of an Erie Canal packet boat, disc jockey, bartender, and actor, most notably in the world premiere of Samuel Beckett's "Radio One." His books are *Slow Night* (poems), *The Use of Force* (poems) and *Black Letters* (nonfiction). His blog *Killing Goliath* (in collaboration with Tom Dolan, Don Aplin, and Mike Haile) was named by *The Guardian* (London) as one of the best American antiwar resources during the Bush Administration's marketing campaign for the Iraq War.

