

Afterword

I've told this story before, I'll tell it again:

When I was a boy I often saw my father naked. He was a widower; I, having no mother, was raised by him alone. We had an old shower in the basement, with a pipe sticking out of the wall, and in that shower he would wash my hair and behind my ears. When it came time to rinse, he would remind me to close my eyes, lest they burn.

These images are not for children but for their parents.

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When my own son was three, shortly after Easter, his mother had to travel on business and left me alone to care for him. At the time I remember feeling irritated—a pressing deadline, and I remember I was working late that night; my son, being distressed by the absence of his mother, wanted to sleep in our bed. I put him there and returned to my study. Later, sometime after two, I heard a *thunk*, and then my son's terrified cry—he had fallen, you see, out of a strange bed. He was inconsolable. He refused to leave my side. I'm cold, he wailed, inconsolably, hugging himself. *I'm cold*.

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The love of form, writes the poet Louise Glück, *is a love of endings*. These images were each given—and not taken—in the city of Sarajevo during the second half of 1992. Presently the city is still under siege and like many I do not know what is to happen next. But I do know that each of the figures herein is animated by and charged with and beholden to a spirit I can neither fathom nor fully grasp. What is the study of the body if not a yearning to reach the soul?

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This spirit I am referring to belongs to those who recognize it. It is, among other things, that same spirit which once blew into my household and made my son cold; it is also that same spirit which implored me to set aside my work and to comfort him.

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The study of war is also the study of peace. These, then, the figures of a peace the world has yet to make.

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First, I hold them each in awe; then I let them go.

—*Stephen Brings*
Stuttgart, 1993