

Rembrandt, “Titus”

by [Peter Cooley](#) in the [July 26, 2011](#) issue

Since I can't pay my tribute to the sun
like citizens in the Roman Empire,
especially that old ragtag Nazareth
where things happened and are progressing here
in my fingers—I have to pay Rembrandt
a kind of tribute, poem after poem.

A man should never outlive his own son.
Titus, you were the last to leave Rembrandt.
Here, seventeen, you will live ten more years.

I started to write these poems about light.
Now all I write about is death and hope:
Titus, looking out at us, planned a life,
marries ten years later, dies in a year.

Say it: the obscenity of dying.

I'll muse on him: a memento mori.
I'll prop his postcard up to light my desk.