



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Introducing Michael Hopkins

Abby Frucht

Pleiades: Literature in Context, Volume 38, Issue 2, Summer 2018, p. 149 (Article)

Published by University of Central Missouri, Department of English and Philosophy

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/plc.2018.0193>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/697265>

---

## Introducing Michael Hopkins

Not long ago I had the privilege of serving as judge for a local fiction contest. Michael Hopkins' story, *Static*, rose to the top of a pool of accomplished, eye-catching finalists because its delicacy—its way of never saying outright the thing most needing to be understood, its insistence on understatement not for the sake of style but because in life, for everything that needs to be spoken aloud there's something else for which words are worse than inadequate—appealed to me. The subject of *Static* is....except I shouldn't explain, since to explain would subtract from *Static* rather than add to it. Suffice it to say that nothing about *Static* tipped me off on Michael's new story, *Full Count*, which has to do with a Korean Phillies pitcher, Hyeon-Jeong, aka Rick, who upends the world of baseball and wears out his welcome by throwing countless unhittable knuckleballs. You might be thinking, like I did, that the world is over crowded with baseball stories, and you might be asking why, when I stayed mum about *Static*, I'm revealing, already, so much about *Full Count*. Well but that's only the bare bones beginning. I don't love baseball stories, generally. They remind me of those sports-based word problems in seventh grade math, of which I flunked every quiz since, playing no sports, I had no clue what they wanted me to think or do. To tell the truth it's only because I liked *Static* so much I kept reading *Full Count*. I'm so grateful I did. Hopkins' skill for keeping quiet is at first glance absent here, camouflaged by the noise of a baseball diamond. But those noises give way at just the right moments and in just the right measure to Rick's private and defiant resolution of his problem. The very opposite of *Static*, in whose small domestic setting big things happen, the heart of *Full Count* beats more privately than it appears, yet this brilliant fiction spins us—like that of Pulitzer Prize winner Viet Thanh Nguyen, which I first read in my service as Pen Faulkner judge—into the charged territory of political identity, loss, and assimilation. We come away smart and smarting, moved and enlightened or rather lit up, in motion, like the ball game itself.

Michael Hopkins lives one town away from me here in Wisconsin. We've never met. It's possible we've crossed paths, and it's possible too we'll have coffee one day, talk writing, politics, dogs, whatever. Maybe we'll be friends, but for now it's a thrill to have learned Michael's out there, just down the road. Why a thrill, you ask? Aren't all writers just down some road from each other? Isn't every new story by anyone anywhere every reader's discovery? Yes....but no. I thank *The Mill*, *Pleiades*, Pen Faulkner, and other venues for allowing me this privilege of getting closer than usual, of reaching into, and out to, the next world over.

—Abby Frucht

