

F O U R S Q U A R E

Tim Ramick

everything I wish to speak of,
from memory to confession to
observation to lie, is true, all of it,
beginning to end, the end yet to
be, the beginning indeterminate,
the duration interminable, start to
finish, if there were a start, if there
is to be a finish, whether I speak
as Taylor, my father's masculinity,
or as another gleam of the I,
the truth of the matter is that

something I would like to tell of,
to whisper in the dark, to shout
from the mountaintop, eludes me,
mocks me in silence, mocks me by
its silence, resisting mine, its
silence producing my silence,
originating in the ear and not
the tongue, the cortex and not
the larynx, whether I speak as
Sayes, my father's femininity, or as
another blink of the I, convinced that

nothing I can say can create
change within what has transpired,
what is currented under the
bridge and is gone, the past as
passed, the future as passing, the
present impassable as the method
of conveyance, my time in a locked
groove, unlocking as it regrooves,
whether I speak as Ramick, my
mother's masculinity, or as
another squint of the I, afraid that

anything I try to say now would
sound hollow, would ring false,
could be shown to be sour grapes
or too-much-protestation, furious
sounds signifying little, the forlorn
bleat of a sheep in the fold, the boy
crying wolf in his father's arms, the
pursuit of sympathy in the land of
happiness, whether I speak as
Cearley, my mother's femininity, or
as another wink of the I, aware that

what I witness as the whole isn't the whole, is only a portion of the whole, grommet to shoe, floe to tide, idea to action to belief, subset of a subset of a subset, setting the table for constant mortal disappointment, specks within the span, clutching to the debris of a wrecked low-lying country, waterswept by outside mortal confidence, positive

what I hold in my heart is a product of nature and nurture, the confluence of rivering lives, of chemical and behavioral connections, not of imagination, no flinted self to flinted self sparkings, the individual ignition of the individual will amid the communal want, the assertion of autobiographical genesis within mass apocryphal malaise, certain

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what I consider truth is as alluvial as a flood plain, tributary and residual, raising and carving the internal land, the inland terrain of private remembrance and public faith, my succumbing to the deltas of private faith and public remembrance and purgatorial amnesia, my inability to speak out with rigor or focus or candor frustrating me, knowing

what I plead guilty to or innocent of is beside the point, a frontage road along the highway of the actual, neither superfluous nor essential, the terror of mediocrity, the pluvial clogging of municipal drains, until the highway billboards peek out of the new sea, advertising to fresh flotsam, my creator's pardon bobbing along like an airtight coffin, believing

this comes from my father's father, the Taylor urge, or a portion of this, this that boxes me, a quarter of my constitution, this that delineates me and affords me the I chagrin, the apology for not being everyone else, not existing as everything else, absolute dispersal, now that I reach to unlatch the window, to unstuff the room, my half-supposing

this originates from my mother's father, the Ramick verve, or a portion of this, this that boxes me, a quarter of my bloodflow, this that distinguishes me and grants me the I bravado, the glory of not being anyone but myself, only temporary distillation, now that I reach to wipe the condensation from the window, the moisture blent with grime, my asserting

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this arises from my father's mother, the Sayes desire, or a portion of this, this that boxes me, a quarter of my skinwrap, this that discerns me and saddles me with the I centricity, the burden of being nobody else but myself, clenched concentration, now that I reach to put my fist through the window, not a fist of anger but of bewilderment, my assuming

this springs from my mother's mother, the Cearley arousal, or a portion of this, a quarter of my framing, this that defines me and allows me the I mosaic, the wider spectrum to imagine someone else, not just anyone else but someone else, helix refraction, now that I reach to pull the window closed, the rain worsening and angling, my half-suspecting

myself inadequate, not up to the task, the window with its sovereign will, the air in the room the substance of my breath, leaking through the walls without expediency, the outside air as indirect competition, the walls as masoned membranes, my wanting the window open to better observe a shift of birds from wires to limbs, my eyes registering them as a fluctuating smudge, my mind unable to consider

myself superior, the window subject to my whims, witness to my weather exchanges, those undertaken through the frost and soot, the residue of a protean world, the engagement of a mortal mind with meteorological truth, all cycling in the imagination of a lord of systems, the conditional swirl within the unconditional universe, my mind too horizoned to connect, unwilling to determine

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myself competent, the window an opposing force to be reckoned with, not reconciled to, vulnerable—beyond doors or walls or ceilings or floors—to breaching, by rock or quake or fist, the transference of sudden air, the quick removal of barrier and discernment, my mind unsure why gaining entry or release should be of any consequence, my thoughts fractured into shards, unwilling to claim

myself damaged, subservient to the moods of the weather, the window in allegiance with dimensionality and gravity, interior and exterior, the window as leaden metaphor, rain or shine or transitional, lamplit or darkened, the authentic hinge existing within memory, if not memory then the foraging mind, the memories of the mind, my mind's memory unable to see

them, as if they were trees in a treebreak, trees in an ancestral copse, trees reflected in the still eye of a fallen lamb, unlike counted hairs on a borrowed wig, I distrust recognition, whether spiritual or climatic, but lack of structure promotes lax entitlement, while insistence upon structure brings sanctimony, flirting with hypocrisies, my clumsy efforts to ascertain

them, as if they were slipping away behind the curvature with one of the dippers or ursas or constellations, unlike counted blessings fading into familiarity, I dislike clarification, whether astronomic or psychiatric, but absence of order results in sloppy output, while persistence of order breeds tautology, hinting at paradoxes, my inability to embrace

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them, as if they were blown spray from wilderness falls, from broken waves, from suburban hoses, unlike counted angels on the tail of a donkey, I despise classification, whether fluid or static, but the want of an organizing principle produces shoddy execution, while haphazard hope promises disillusionment, edging toward conundrums, my hesitancy to accept

them, as if they were strings of moments looped into themselves, tangled into shape, cousin parabolas, unlike counted rosary beads in the cookie jar, I disdain categorization, whether religious or geometric, but insufficient method leads to sloth, while relentless stringency results in fixation, nodding toward contradictions, my reluctance to grasp

memory, wishing windows open,
the unobstructed view of the
neighbor's weathervane, the
intermittency of the neighbor's
windchimes, the waftings of the
neighbor's flowerbeds, the touch and
taste of any neighboring elsewhere,
I will stay awake with my mouth
shut, having not told everything,
trying hard to dispense with the
telling of the truth of my shallow

destiny, wanting windows clean,
the insight of lives lived outside of
vanity, the nobility of trenchwork,
glass begrimed from the exterior
world and not the interior fright, I
will sink toward dreaming with
my mouth wide open, snoring
comprehension of the netherworld into
the room, setting the subconscious
loose, watching it track down truth,
telling it to target my happy

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history, wanting windows
shattered, the rush of air of lives
not lived in vain, the surprise
heroes of unselfish twists or selfish
flicks of the wrist, all saints
unsainted, I will wake from my
stupor with my mind wide open,
eager to tell something of merit,
some sum and substance of
enlightenment to offset the stark and
telling evidence of my blind

fate, wishing windows shut, the
parade of oxygen through
introspective veins, too retarded
or regaled for imaginative
transfusions, too thin for
clotting, I will go to sleep with
my eyes wide open, the ceiling
tableaux projecting blurred
futures and the resultant
unrecognizable pasts, a flood of
telling images from my wicked

continents of light, not the Taylor within me, but a spiritual gown, the cement culvert and the fiberglass shed between the boyhood yard and the neighboring house, discarded toys of modular satisfaction, time never lost, memory mutable, the tinkering wheel, the erecting gear, colored wood and silver strips combine and conspire to winter me into

countries of grey, not the Ramick within me, but an ashen coat, the wire fencing and the low slung shed between the boyhood house and the neighboring yard, discarded dolls of plastic substitution, time never lost, memory malleable, the trolling cherub, the cabbage babe, feminine hips and masculine chests combine and conspire to autumn me into

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regions of color, not the Sayes within me, but a spectrummed jacket, the rhubarb patch and slanted posts between the field of play and the neighboring property, discarded gadgets of serendipitous determination, time never lost, memory mercurial, the divining twig, the geigering box, wood tremble and metallic chatter combine and conspire to summer me into

nations of dark, not the Cearley within me, but a starless shroud, the untended garden and the pile of dirt between the boyhood home and the empty lot, discarded implements of sedimentary manipulation, time never lost, memory modifiable, the troweling claw, the sieving hand, clodded soil and murdered weeds combine and conspire to spring me into

beds of insomnia, the tight wakefulness of unlimited disconnections, the gulch between innocence and masochism, my life chalked early with the outline of self-demise, moments of preservation amid binges of damage, rolling the orange on the abandoned green in the desert, zipping the flank of the checkered shorts beside the park swing, the unmaking of my

beds of melancholia, the wide transference of switchable unlikelihoods, the gap between childhood and drudgery, my life stained early with suspicion of failure, one incident of generosity for every thousand of indulgence, a patient listen here, an errand run there, nothing to speak of, nothing to crow about, nothing with which to refreshen my

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beds of nostalgia, the static transmittance of buried treasures, the gully between the naïve and the suppressed, my life whitewashed early by tract-home fluorescence, nights of dreamlessness framed by days of fantast, easy weather and easier seasons inducing idle wistfulness for sensual purposes, pornographic faith in tomorrow, the displacement of my

beds of amnesia, the swift forgetfulness of a dislodged life, the gulf between youthfulness and protocol, my life bleached early by clean sun, selective memory atop prescriptive acts, taking advantage of a whistled persona and a squeaky ledger, scot-free of adhesive blame except to those wanting private and permanent access, the stern waving off of my

efforts, the window won't open, I
won't open up, not yet, not while
the subterranean language flows,
cavern to grotto, wasteland to reef,
telling the telling before anything
is told, the unfolding of the gift as
gift itself, the box emptied of
objects so the box becomes object,
the container as contained, the
physics not of the absolute but of
the imperceptible, elbow-greased

efforts, the window won't wipe
clear, I won't come clean, not yet,
not while there is a motherlode of
metaphors to tap, uranium to coal,
resource to potential, luring the
gargoyle from the comrade's chest,
the eternal screw from the
nightmares of the gelded self, the
dyslexic confusion of sequence,
what should come before what, what
should follow what, jaw-clenched

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efforts, the window won't break, I
won't break down, not yet, not
while the linguistic structure holds,
buttresses to bulkheads, girders to
widower's walk, not believing in
the accident of any incident, the
specificity of proxy prayer, group
clapping therapy in hotel
conference rooms, all that playful
energy expended to foster
predictability, knee-bent

efforts, the window won't shut, I
won't shut down, not yet, not
while the bucket keeps bringing
up unquenching words, travelous
to weatherive, rootiment to
rafterous, the watering and
fertilizing of a seedless acre, the
careful completion of the form
with its triplicating carbons, the
sharp sickening lust to subvert
self-imposed plans, eye-squinted

somersaults, setting my wheeled sights upon the estimated zenith, the site of arrival and departure, bitter and blessed, comings and goings dependent upon temporal motion, I can't sleep, the house stalls and goes stale, I long simultaneously for fresh air and suffocation, death with a reprise or the eternal overture, nostril-flaring, fist-pumping, big-hearted

calisthenics, the getting from here to there not as significant as the spilling of the quill, allowing the permutations to pool into place, fractured observations of the obvious, I won't be light-hearted, the house is dim by night and dimmer by day, I long simultaneously for definition and darkness, black edge and black center, heart-on-my-sleeve tippy-toed

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gyrations, breathing accomplished without panic in the eyes, panic reserved for the initial moments every morning upon waking, sour gut and swollen inadequacy, I won't reminisce, the house is made of tupperware and sports a stay-fresh yard, I long simultaneously for fragility and endurance, delicate archetype or archeological ephemera, half-brained full-hearted

acrobatics, cartwheeling from blueprint to ruin, bringing the story down to the level of the self, graphing the soul, or the possibility of the soul, the wide-eyed necessary idea of the soul, I can't remember, the house fills with fluid and swells, I long simultaneously for reprisal and forgiveness, loving apocalypse and just rapture, strenuous cardio-vascular

compassion, range charity, the
bison absolve, my father's father
worked rural delivery and lived just
seasons shy of a century, my son's
son (if our son were to have a son)
might acknowledge the lust for evil
as banal, might favor one
topography over another, might
consider his grandfather a poverty
fool, might not consider him at
all, turn of the table, twist of

joy, acre thrills, the train alludes,
my mother's father worked the
derricks and died in bed, my
daughter's son (if we had a
daughter and if she were to have
a son) might reject the love of
power as paramount, might favor
one party over another, might
consider his grandfather a word
hobbyist, might not consider him
at all, turn of the card, twist of

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hope, clearing trust, the flock
lifts, my father's mother kept a tidy
house and died corsetted and
young, my son's daughter (if our
son were to have a daughter) might
dismiss the evil of lust as
fundamental, might favor one
gender over another, might
consider her grandfather a carnal
codger, might not consider him at
all, turn of the stomach, twist of

faith, delta promise, the river
delivers, my mother's mother fed
hoboes and her death rattle broke
hearts, my daughter's daughter (if
we had a daughter and if she were
to have a daughter) might embrace
the power of love as exaggerated,
might favor one god over another,
might consider her grandfather a
harmless sweet, might not consider
him at all, turn of the tide, twist of

the future, what comes around
went around, we spin and we
revolve as we speed with the
expanse, regressive infinity, now
the clouds disperse as individuals,
this they do because (certainly) it's
one of the things they can do, I
can stoop to fetch a lucky penny, I
could market it into a fortune, I
will die in abject squalor, an
unimaginative addition to

the plot, what comes out of it
went into it, reap what you sow
surety, reward and retribution,
now the clouds merge into a
mass, this they do because
(inarguably) it's one of the things
they can do, I can crouch to lace
my new shoes, I could stroll with
humility into the history books,
I will curl my toes in fear of
amputation, a cowardly response to

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the grave, what comes up went
down, the feisty laws of
resurfacing and resettling,
lavalamp roil, now the clouds
mount into a storm, this they do
because (indeed) it's one of the
things they can do, I can kneel
to peer under the altar, I could
gain insight into the times, I will
shut my eyes against the awful
truth, a predictable reaction to

the heavens, what is below was
above, spiritual gravity, all souls
to their appointed stations go,
now the clouds lie low and moist,
this they do because (yes) it's one
of the things they can do, I can
squat to study a squashed bug, I
could stoop to acts of selfish
entitlement, I will maintain
allegiance to compassion,
a disciplined resistance to

all that is ordained, to the unwritten prophecies of every life, every cough of distraction, every hiccup of betrayal, the flinch of self-forgiveness, whether the balm comes from absolution or shame, I go to the playground to carousel and leave with residual vertigo, a swirled and sickening disorientation, the temporary loss of a presiding and vertical perspective, this memory of

all that is surprising, to the unravelling inclinations of every moment, every failed picnic, every lie to a child, the spasm of self-indifference, whether the pique comes from stoicism or chagrin, I go to the market to buy produce and leave with candy, sweetness stuck between my teeth, sticking to my ribs, sticky in my pockets, the temporary lure of dulcet edge, this product of

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all that is conditional, to the unknowable vagaries of every existence, every rained-out victory, every opportune peek, the reflex of self-approval, whether the applause comes from nepotism or nerve, I go to the bank to deposit and leave with pockets stuffed, food for the family wadded into disregard, the temporary avalanche of self-assertion, this build-up of

all that is difficult, to the unrelenting urgencies of every id and ego, every craved privacy, every concession to a conquest, the twitch of self-recognition, whether the wink comes from collusion or blame, I go to the well to fetch water and leave drunk on vinegar, sour-tongued and swollen-bellied, gout-toed and bleary-eyed, the temporary flooding of an edifice mind, this watering down of

jericho mortar, quality control,
rubble shock, the effrontery of
attack jazz, I put in my application
for the ivory tower, if there's to be
a fall it ought to be significant,
loud and seismic, resonating
throughout critical theory,
footnoted and indexed, cited and
cross-referenced, what I desire is
proffered as errata on separate
sheets, time increments toward

trojan curfew, gift horse in the
mouth, dawn resentment, the
tension within swedish reggae, I
enter my plea of shruggery, if
there's to be a conflict it ought to
be iconic, indifference for and
against posterity, paper stencils
and tempera paint, value
depreciation, symbol recognition,
what I desire is smeared on town
walls, time sediments toward

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aberfan denial, quantity control,
generation wipe, the rumblings of
a welsh lullaby, I utter a prayer for
perfect static, if there's to be a
burial it ought to be deep, strata
incubation and molten womb,
cross-section theology, the
speculative drill brings up evidence
of lost energy, truncated childhoods,
what I desire is entombed under
tons of coal slag, time tallies toward

pompeii kismet, location is
everything, poses of endearment,
the ashen weight of mafia baroque,
I tender my resignation via
philosophical stain, if there's to be
a disaster it ought to be ironic,
associational reality, the
professionalism of cleverness, the
aesthetics of absence, what I desire
is museumed in the catacombs of
dead cities, time reduces toward

we know not what, neither
resolution nor abstraction, a
constantly changing sameness,
difference and repetition, the Taylor
strand, the tangled weave, children
in the park playing foursquare,
chromosomal sway, I hide my teeth
with my hand when I laugh, the
world kicks those who don't fight
back when they're down, and so
we flail and thrash and wait for

we know not what, neither
transcendence nor fragmentation,
a constantly changing sameness,
repetition and difference, the
Ramick thread, the raveled sleeve,
children on the tracks playing
hopscotch, vaginal refusal, I cut
my hair without mirror or comb,
the world forgets those who forget
the world, and so we irrigate and
steward and harvest and wait for

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we know not what, neither
salvation nor apostasy, a
constantly changing sameness,
difference and repetition, the
Sayes fiber, the frayed edge,
children in the alley playing
dodgeball, genealogical pull, I
hold my breath when I walk under
ladders, the world mocks those
who take themselves too seriously,
and so we frolic and wait for

we know not what, neither
immortality nor annihilation, a
constantly changing sameness,
repetition and difference, the
Cearley string, the worn selvage,
children in the basement playing
twister, orchard pruning, I dream
of horsesnakes under my covers,
the world silences the silent and
humbles the meek, and so we
shout and stamp and wait for

cohesion, linear progression, here to there fidelity, I've something to say, unless I've already said it, unless it can't be said, the saying as the said, the said buried in the saying, as true as the truest truth, truer than true, the fullest possible expression of every everything, nothing left out, I'm not persuaded, not as a finite mind, not as the sayer, knowing

congruence, straightforward normalcy, arrow intent, I've something to say, sweet and crumbly, cut into squares like cake, offered on flimsy paper plates with sharpened sterling forks, white carpet trepidation, the ongoing accident of a bumped elbow, impending stains from frosted words, what I said and what I will say and what I wish I had said, knowing

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consolidation, comprehensible fashion, a peg to hang one's hat upon, I've something to say, composed and rehearsed and tucked into my pocket, a persuasive speech that I'd now deliver if it weren't for rapidly diminishing time and space, if not for the butterflies in my stomach and the frog in my throat, shaky hands and a shakier voice, knowing

coherence, narrative trafficking, logical sequences at bargain prices, I've something to say, free and easy and piped into aisles, distributed to classrooms, stuck under wiperblades, not evangelistic propaganda, not self-serving aggrandisement, but a simple message of multiplicity, beyond the generosity of 'and' or 'or,' to the magnanimity of 'and' *and* 'or,' choice and inclusion, knowing