

Is it the plane flight from California or Hawaii: five or ten hours? Or too much to undergo, imagining all he'd see, recall. *Relive! Rethink. Refeel.* Not to mention confronting all that *might* have been. Leaving him waiting to discover what price he'd have to pay to avoid, as Bob Dylan put it, "going through all these things twice."

The writer once wrote, "There came a point he realized he'd be changed not by traveling but by coming home." Which might be one too many changes. Self as writer still curious, litmus paper perennially ready for tests, recording. But self as human? Not so much. If a trip's unlikely, however, a good part of the writer will miss not making it.

About going home. Only yesterday, the writer was thinking of The Western Front. When he was nineteen, it was a bar on Western Avenue in Cambridge, then the far edge of the known college world. Something wild in the air in its liquor, dope, rock'n'roll; he hungered for more. He'd like to see it again, see what he'd make of it now. And just this morning the writer summoned up the rows of enormous beech trees of a park a few blocks from where he grew up. Some of them a century old when he was born. The beech trees just popped into his mind.

And...this afternoon, the writer's brother e-mailed him a link to a video of Boston Red Sox center fielder Brock Holt making a phenomenal diving catch at Fenway Park. The hyper-green of the playing field, known to the writer from childhood; the white uniforms, the Red Sox Nation a fan religion. But of course you don't have to be there to tune in, keep the faith.

So the writer is...not there. Both here and gone. In David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*, exiled poet Ovid finally realizes he will not return to Rome, even if allowed. In this foreign place he's found his true fate. Now a whole hidden life has come back to the poet. Childhood, "Not as I had previously remembered it, but in some clearer form, as it really was; which is why my past, as I recall it now, continually astonishes me. It is as if it happened to someone else, and I were being handed a new past, that leads, as I follow it out, to a present in which I appear out of my old body as a new and other self."

Does the writer expect such metamorphosis? Has it already happened? Falling off to sleep, his thought is: If you spend your whole life trying to be something you're

not, that's who you are. But then, who were you supposed to be? Or, who was that person you never could have been, but thought you were going to be?

The Beatles sang, "Once there was a way to get back homeward/Once there was a way to get back home..." But how to return to the point of departure, if that's the hunger, the time of one's life irreversible. Irreparable?

So, for the moment, and moments are running out...

As far as returning to Boston...

Never say never, but, nonetheless...

For the writer, most likely, "it's just no, nay, never, no nay never no more."

Thomas Farber has been awarded Guggenheim and, three times, National Endowment fellowships for fiction and creative nonfiction, Thomas Farber has been a Fulbright Scholar, recipient of the Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize, and Rockefeller Foundation scholar at Bellagio. His recent books include *The End of My Wits*, *Brief Nudity*, and *The Beholder*. Former Visiting Distinguished Writer at the University of Hawai'i, he teaches at the University of California, Berkeley, and is Publisher/Editor-in-Chief of *El León Literary Arts*.

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Oil on Canvas Board, 10 x 8 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST