

Nicholas Pierce

from CRUDE

10.

Oil Notes tells two love stories. In one Bass courts his future wife; in the other he hunts for oil in Mississippi, never stopping to ponder how his wife might feel about the comparison. We forgive him because he published the book in 1989, because we like to think the intervening decades have enlightened us to the evils of capitalism, because Bass intoxicates us with romantic descriptions of discovery and extraction, discovery and attraction, because his prose possesses a muscular sensitivity endemic to southern men. Or we don't forgive him, because why should we? Wikipedia tells me he's now divorced.

11.

"*My* love," remarks the hypothetical critic. "A generous reader might find the term endearing, but in a collection about oil, its harvesting and hoarding, 'my' adopts a different valence, becomes possessive, as though Pierce were taking ownership of the beloved." The hypothetical critic objects to my criticism of *Oil Notes*: "Putting aside the sonnet's ad hominem attack, the problem is not with Pierce's argument but that he engages in the same abysmal behavior as Bass, *i.e.*, treating oil as a metaphor for love, even if, in Pierce, love is also rotten." The hypothetical critic whispers in the ear of every sonnet, not just this one, is overbearing and stubborn and petty and never wrong.

15.

My father says *different* like it's a bad thing
Foreign films different sushi different tattoos
Different my love though he never says my love
Is different despite the ink sleeve on their
Left arm despite their brown skin their pronoun
Every night in junior high I went to bed hoping
To wake in a different body as Bailey
My classmate the soccer player with bleach-
Blonde locks and no acne he looked different
The last time I saw him a used car salesman
With stubble and a belly he'd forgotten my name
My love I wish I came from a different family
Wish I could tell you I'm not my father not
The name he gave me Nick Pierce two kinds of wounds

