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Where Names Come From Peter Wortsman

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Peter Wortsman

WHERE NAMES COME FROM

(for Russell Edson)

The spinning stops. The hand reaches in and all the names inscribed on slips of paper scatter to the far corners of the box, trying to elude selection. Huddling among strangers: Smith, Gonzales, Cohen, Ho et al, confused and nauseous, the jumbled appellations are compelled to assume positions of intimacy. It is hard for the Chastities and Prudences of this world and sheer hell for the claustrophobic Meekers and timid Smileys. Better to grace a tombstone, they insist, at least it offers a semblance of privacy and stands still. But there are those—always a few in every batch—who actually like it in the box. (More thrilling than a telephone book!) Shameless, they relish the roulette-like risk and tumble and even take pleasure in the crude handling. This is particularly true of certain neglected middle initials and hyphenated maiden names dying to take a spin with a stranger. Perhaps your name is one of these.