

## Distance Over Time

---

*Jason Wirtz*

Driving for the Grand Canyon just before dusk  
we pass a police officer on the side of the road,  
his lights going a thousand beats per minute.  
He's even got the guy, or girl – we're driving too fast to tell –  
out of the car for a lecture.

Looking at the darkening sky  
I continue to speed past  
thinking he's caught his limit.  
A half an hour later he catches up to us  
but I've spotted him in the rear view a ways back  
and am only doing sixty-five –  
he pulls us over anyway.

As he approaches the driver's side window  
he taps the face of the stopwatch on his wrist  
says he punched it when we passed him forty miles back  
and has calculated our average speed  
– distance over time –  
to be around eighty.  
He writes the ticket and chuckles to himself  
when we tell him we're trying to see the Grand Canyon before dark.  
It's another forty, forty-five minutes up the road, he says.

In the morning we walk to the metal railing  
at the edge of the canyon  
and look about one mile down  
and another eighteen across.  
It only takes my eyes a few seconds to do this  
and I calculate my average speed at around  
  
thirty thousand miles per hour.

Then I slow it down, looking to where the rings of rock change color,

*Philament TIME – November 2012*

where the faint black curl of a river cuts through,  
where a pebble kicked over the edge skips along and then disappears,  
and where a well-armored pill bug moves steadily along the cement platform  
then dips into the canyon itself  
and distance over time becomes Sisyphean.

In the afternoon we sit in the sun reading on lounge chairs.  
I look over at you, lost in your book of entangled lovers,  
such distance in your eyes, so far from here,  
so far that I can't even see you.

Then you look up and smile.  
You've come back in an instant,  
you've traversed such infinite distance to be with me  
and moved at such astonishing speeds to find me here  
sitting with you in the sun.

*Jason Wirtz is an Assistant Professor of English Education at Hunter College, City University of New York, where he teaches adolescent English, rhetoric and composition. His research concentrates on the nature of invention as it manifests itself in writers.*