

2002

Penance

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MINDAE M. KADOUS

PENANCE

Your complexion is a window to the soul,

and it is this that I want to write about-
what Society asks us to endure,

but I am not ready to.

Instead, I remember Father O' Flanagan's three Hail Marys
and the confessional box,
its insides I had confessed eight years of my life to-

the same wood-paneled walls with the same gray screen, bordered by
old, silver duct tape rolling up at the corners.

I would stare hard into that gray screen,
as it veiled my complexion from the holy voice on the other side
and worry I was taking too long
and everyone waiting behind me in line would think it, too.

I'd walk out of that confessional box carrying my penance with me-

knowing once again, I'd stand in front of the bathroom mirror
washing my hands clean and counting the blemishes
on my 13-year-old face-

an indication that my life was still out of balance.