

# New Poetry by Benjamin Bellet: “What Was It Like?”; “Zero Five Thirty”; “West Point”



Once Again Spreading / *image by Amalie Flynn*

## What Was It Like?

Over-lit airport terminals

or the rifle range at night,  
the first tracer

crackling in night vision  
over pale green hills. Or—

a group of souls  
preparing

to die together,

the plane shuddering  
in its evasive bank,

our eyes knowing

for once  
each other. Or—

relation based  
not on preference

but direst need.

The livid explosion  
we invited,

then flinched.

Thousands of miles.

### **Cadet**

(West Point, N.Y.)

On restriction to barracks

for dereliction of duty  
(otherwise known

as sleeping through classes),

you look beyond  
the window.

Clad in gray  
Civil War-era uniforms,

a broken succession

of nineteen-year-olds  
walk through the snow

at right angles,

flinching at the chill  
across their razor-burn,

the wind off the Hudson.

West of the river  
atop Battle Monument

stands winged Fame,

her bronze pinions cut  
into the overcast.

In your room  
sits you.

A bit too warm,

the floor fresh-cleaned  
with Mop & Glo,

dry-cleaned wool pants  
hanging over

stacked tins  
of shoe polish

in the congestion of New York  
midwinter air.

You loved back then

to sleep, hovering  
in un-location,

absolved until  
the dread summed to

the impossibility

of being again  
late for formation,

running cold water  
then the razor

over that same  
old rash—Now, somewhere

down the hallway

the boot-squeak,  
hoot and snicker  
  
of men making  
their weekend exit  
  
for nearby Newburgh,  
the last door-slam,  
  
that triumph  
  
of silence  
once again spreading

**Zero Five-Thirty**  
(Fort Riley, KS)

From the hilltop down,  
  
the base is rimmed by a crust  
of bluish signs  
  
glowing somewhat  
appealingly at dawn—  
  
pawn shops, strip clubs,  
quick-cash stores.  
  
The fragmented receptacles  
for the nightly outflux  
  
of dirty dollar bills,  
  
leftover sand,  
hard-ons and sweat.  
  
Flitting between  
blackout shades,  
  
the vague milky secretions

of our half-drowned  
dull and brightest, now  
making their way back up  
to formation.

Their bass-notes drift  
across endless plains  
of identical duplexes  
where their families still sleep.

Sunrise comes soft  
as a bloody nose.

Groups of men  
jog past in squares.