

hotel chiaroscuro: a photograph
by jeffrey reid pettis

with the curtains not quite closed,
an intruding strip of blue sunrise
(or so it appears in the photograph)
forces the hands of the clock open,
makes it tether time back to itself.
no more citrus-and-shadow mystery
hours. no bubble baths and chopin.
no, now is the hour of stolen night-
stand bibles, alphabetized by sin,
of white towels pooled on roasted
hardwood floors or black hole shag,
of returning everything to its proper
place. the light that took its shelter
in the corners of the room at night
now ascends the couch and creeps up
wood slat walls in artificial sunrise.
the lampshade halo fades from gold
to beige and hangs askew. the room
orbits the floor lamp and its broken
switch, the last bastion against in-
betweens. check-out is at eleven; late
guests are subject to additional charges.