

Jim Shows Me Twelve Jesuses

by Heather Kirn Lanier

in cinematic snippets, ten-second scenes of twelve Sons
of man and, small eyes wide, he wants to
know

which face, which frame, which meekest little finger
captures the divine like aurora borealis

in a mason jar? The one kneeling in gravel, black kinks coarse
as uncombed wool, hands flailing a whirlwind

of precepts like he's conjuring religion from air?
New shot, new film: meet the close-up Jesus

whose adage and all its archaeology blink gone
the second you spot them: blue eyes

like small see-through planets, crystalline as the topaz
in glass-encased crowns. Or how about

a clown, equipped with clown's fro, sporting
Superman tee and suspenders? This Jesus jiggies

to the top of a New York high-rise, then weeps
at the right hand of twin towers. Charmed,

bored, bemused—I still don't see
what I need, and what

do I need? A person of color? An androgynous mother?

Even another—rectangular jaws made larger by

cropped hair and a rough goatee—is, at first,
just another modern man

playing God, or trying to, and don't I see that
infant need whenever the rearview reflects

my gritted teeth, my squint-eyes raging at a road that won't go
fast enough for the dashboard's digital clock

that's also mine and always ticks for me?
But then a dozen villagers in burlap robes

ask the bowl-cut Jesus *why*, and *what*, and *who*,
and this one, this one gulps

at doubt, then airs it out
by words of wide Bronx vowels

like his is a draft he's surprised by, like
who knew he'd find metaphors of stone?

Like his father is weird as the eyes
of a spider, like he's learning religion as he goes.

