The Specter of Piety

I. The Epitaph as Prologue

She lived
with a measure of
touch-and-go tenderness
similar to
Playboy in braille

She died
waiting for the mail

II. Departure Paroles Emotion

Leave
leave
I know you will
and when you leave
you'll leave
a fossilized scar that will
like a hot coal burn
my hand or
like a cold coal blacken it

A wound from a burn is but a scar

Like an iron
in pursuit of a collar
you starched
our love
now you leave
forgetting the prism of
time that filters
the metaphor

You leave
and leave me
prisoner of urges
more insurgent than
a platoon of sperm
lurking in an enticed
man before a waiting women

You leave
and leave me
stripping contingencies
revealing splendour and joy
in slender starchless
thoughts of suicide

You leave
and leave me
heir to those
strobing
sliding
tumbling
ever so sovereign
tears of ambiguity

In the interlude
I shall be still
to know that
you loved me
and I sustained
a stained metaphor

III. Let's Rise and Sing

I rejoice in the voice of the ghetto
I grew up
in a frame house
not far from St. Rita's
near the playground
where the blacks silhouette
their lives
in the framed boundaries
of a final full court press

Where the white kids
altar boys at St. Rita's
clutch the fences and watch

Bleached with the innocence of fear
those white boys
beautiful boys
would walk home
only to find their parents
clutching the kiss of the hops
orchestrating their silent diatribes

The boys would leave
and leave me
lingering
glancing
brooding
Life is a choir of tuneless emotions

Like firecrackers kaleidoscoping
a fractured darkness
life strobes
death absorbs
the skies foam and swallow
swallow

Tiny growing tumors
choke life
colossal tumors
salute it

Burn me incense much as
you burned my innocence

Leave
leave
I know you will
and when you leave
you'll leave
a silent coffin that
will bear my will

Do not disturb
those who tune
the acoustical mirages
of life but remain
tone-deaf to the
strobing vibes of death

IV. Death on the Prairie

In Colorado
Timothy felt
the Rockies bulge
and in West Virginia
the mountains are flabby
Oklahoma has Indian mounds
and in Wisconsin
the hills roam

In Kansas
the land has muscle tone

The prairies bristle flat
as the sheek of wheat
in a fifties flat-top
flat as a wafer
flat as the chest of
a wiry halfback

In Sylvia Kansas
where Timothy was born
the plains are mean and beautiful
one day he strolled
to view a sleepy horizon
make love to an anguished sun

After a yawn or two
she looked up
reached out
throbbed and trembled
as her golden arms embraced
the gently dipping
but oh so powerful sun
He saw it all and left a note

To many
the sunset like a
fountain or a seashore
or a mountain is
beautiful to behold

To me
it's the vomit of the Lord
(Timothy 7/2/53 9/9/74) Kansas

To this day
his brother refuses to shave
his father won't touch razor blades
and the sun rises and sets
rises and sets
Rises and sets

V. The Eulogy as Epilogue

He lived
an artist
died a connoisseur
of negative spaces

Suhail Hanna