

# *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 fossiled scar that will  
like a hot coal burn  
my hand or  
like a cold coal blaeken 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  
throbbled 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