

The Bridge

Hart Crane

Hart Crane (1899–1932) was inspired by the modernist poetry of T.S. Eliot and wrote similarly difficult and highly stylized work. His most ambitious work, was *The Bridge* (1930). This poem depicts an epic vision of American life with the Brooklyn Bridge as a central image. The section reprinted below, entitled “To Brooklyn Bridge,” is the poem’s prologue.

THE BRIDGE

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest 1
 The seagull’s wings shall dip and pivot him,
 Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
 Over the chained bay waters Liberty—

Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes 5
 As apparitional as sails that cross
 Some page of figures to be filed away;
 —Till elevators drop us from our day...

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
 With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene 10
 Never disclosed, but hastened to again,
 Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced
 As though the sun took step of thee, yet left
 Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,— 15
 Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft
 A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,
 Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,
 A jest falls from the speechless caravan. 20

Down Wall, from girder into street noon leaks,
 A rip-tooth of the sky’s acetylene;

“The Bridge,” from *Complete Poems of Hart Crane* by Hart Crane, edited by Marc Simon. Copyright © 1933, 1958, 1966 by Liveright Publishing Corporation. Copyright © 1986 by Marc Simon. Used by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.

All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn...
Thy cables breathe the North Atlantic still.

And obscure as that heaven of the Jews, 25
Thy guerdon... Accolade thou dost bestow
Of anonymity time cannot raise:
Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show.

O harp and altar, of the fury fused, 30
(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)
Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,
Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,—

Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift
Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars, 35
Beading thy path—condense eternity:
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.
The City's fiery parcels all undone, 40
Already snow submerges an iron year...

O Sleepless as the river under thee,
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend
And of the curveship lend a myth to God.

In a Station of the Metro

Ezra Pound

Ezra Pound (1885–1972) is considered one of the founding fathers of modern poetry, which sought to reduce writing to its essential features. His poem “In the Station of the Metro” is an excellent example of “imagist” writing, which strives to convey meaning concisely and vividly. Pound attended Hamilton College in New York and lived much of his life abroad. He is best known for *The Cantos*, a collection of poems he worked on throughout much of his life.

IN A STATION OF THE METRO¹

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

1913–1916

From PERSONAE by Ezra Pound, 1909.



George Tooker (1920–2011), *The Subway*, 1950, egg tempera on gesso panel, 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 36 $\frac{1}{8}$ in., Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchased with funds from the Juliana Force Purchase Award, 50.23. Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York.

¹ The Paris subway.

Recuerdo

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Edna St Vincent Millay (1892–1950) was born in Rockland, Maine. When Edna was twenty her poem, *Renascence*, was published in *The Lyric Year*. As a result of this poem, Edna won a scholarship to Vassar. In 1917, the year of her graduation, Millay published her first book, *Renascence and Other Poems*. After leaving Vassar she moved to New York's Greenwich Village where she befriended writers such as Floyd Dell, John Reed, and Max Eastman. The three men were all involved in the left-wing journal, *The Masses*, and she joined in their campaign against Americans involvement in the First World War.

RECUERDO

We were very tired, we were very merry—
 We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
 It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable—
 But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,
 We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon; 1
 And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came
 soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry—
 We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;
 And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,
 From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere; 5
 And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,
 And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,
 We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
 We hailed, "Good morrow, mother!" to a shawl-covered 10
 head,
 And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;
 And she wept, "God bless you!" for the apples and pears,
 And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

From *Collected Poems* by Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1922

The Taxi

Amy Lowell

Amy Lowell (1874–1925) was an American Imagist poet. She grew up in a sophisticated and literary environment, yet she did not attend college and was largely self-educated. Although her writing career spanned just twelve years, she wrote over 600 poems. Lowell lectured about and wrote free-verse poetry; that is, poetry that does not follow strict rules of form. Her poetry used common speech, as she wanted to be free to communicate directly about any subject. In the poem below, published in 1914 in the collection *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds*, readers get the impression of a city and of loss. For what things does the speaker in this poem yearn?

THE TAXI

When I go away from you	1
The world beats dead	
Like a slackened drum.	
I call out for you against the juttred stars	
And shout into the ridges of the wind.	5
Streets coming fast,	
One after the other,	
Wedge you away from me,	
And the lamps of the city prick my eyes	
So that I can no longer see your face.	10
Why should I leave you,	
To wound myself upon the sharp edges of the night?	

Lenox Avenue: Midnight

Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes (1902–1967) was one of the most important figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Although widely respected, he was often criticized for publishing stories and poetry that included violence and imperfect characters. In this poem, published in 1926, the speaker combines musical terms with a specific street to evoke a certain mood.

LENOX AVENUE: MIDNIGHT

The rhythm of life	1
Is a jazz rhythm,	
Honey,	
The gods are laughing at us.	
The broken heart of love,	5
The weary, weary heart of pain—	
Overtones,	
Undertones,	
To the rumble of street cars,	
To the swish of rain.	
Lenox Avenue,	
Honey,	10
Midnight,	
And the gods are laughing at us.	

“Lenox Avenue: Midnight” from THE COLLECTED POEMS OF LANGSTON HUGHES by Langston Hughes, edited by Arnold Rampersad with David Roessel, Associate Editor, copyright © 1994 by the Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

New York Subway

Hilda Morley

Hilda Morley (1919–1998) had a long and distinguished career as a poet and teacher. She taught for many years in New York City. In the poem below, published in the collection titled *To Hold My Hand: Selected Poems 1955–1983*, we read about a subway event that might still happen today. Readers might notice that many different people come together to help someone. Do these acts of kindness still take place?

NEW YORK SUBWAY

The beauty of people in the subway 1
 that evening, Saturday, holding the door for whoever
 was slower or
 left behind
 (even with 5
 all that Saturday-night
 excitement)
 & the high-school boys from Queens, boasting,
 joking together
 proudly in their expectations
 & power, young frolicsome
 bulls, 10
 & the three office-girls
 each strangely beautiful, the Indian
 with dark skin & the girl with her haircut
 very short and fringed, like Joan
 at the stake, the corners
 of her mouth laughing 15
 & the black girl delicate
 as a doe, dark-brown in pale-brown clothes
 & the tall woman in a long caftan, the other
 day,
 serene & serious & the Puerto Rican
 holding the door for more than 3 minutes for 20
 the feeble, crippled, hunched little man who
 could not raise his head,
 whose hand I held, to
 help him into the subway-car—
 so we were
 joined in helping him & someone, 25
 seeing us, gives up his seat,
 learning
 from us what we had learned from each other.

From *To Hold My Hand: Selected Poems 1955–1983* by Hilda Morley. Reprinted by permission of The Sheep Meadow Press.

The City in Which I Love You

Li-Young Lee

Li-Young Lee was born in 1957 in Jakarta, Indonesia, of Chinese parents. His father, who was a personal physician to Mao Zedong while in China, relocated his family to Indonesia, where he helped found Gamaliel University. In 1959 the Lee family fled the country to escape anti-Chinese sentiment and after a five-year trek through Hong Kong, Macau, and Japan, they settled in the United States in 1964. He is the author of *Book of My Nights*, *The City in Which I Love You* (1991), *Rose* (1986), as well as a memoir entitled *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance* (1995).

THE CITY IN WHICH I LOVE YOU

Morning comes to this city vacant of you.	1
Pages and windows flare, and you are not there.	
Someone sweeps his portion of sidewalk,	
wakens the drunk, slumped like laundry,	
and you are gone.	5
You are not in the wind	
which someone notes in the margins of a book.	
You are gone out of the small fires in abandoned lots	
where human figures huddle,	
each aspiring to its own ghost.	10
Between brick walls, in a space no wider than my face,	
a leafless sapling stands in mud.	
In its branches, a nest of raw mouths	
gaping and cheeping, scrawny fires that must eat.	
My hunger for you is no less than theirs.	15

Li-Young Lee, excerpt from *The City in Which I Love You*. Copyright © 1990 by Li-Young Lee. Reprinted by permission of Boa Editions, Ltd., www.boaeditons.org

Meditation on a Brooklyn Bench

Harvey Shapiro

Harvey Shapiro is described by *The New York Times* as the “reigning laureate of New York’s vox populi,” i.e. the people’s poet. He has written over a dozen volumes of poetry including *The Sights Along the Harbor*. His poetry encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects, including New York streets and locales, the Brooklyn waterfront, love, and the brutality of war.

MEDITATION ON A BROOKLYN BENCH

I was by myself on the promenade, facing the massive city. Pleasure craft cut white trails in the water.	1
The lady with the lamp dim green in the dim green afternoon.	5
A Circle Line boat, looking sprightly, hurrying up river toward the Bridge, and the old paddle steamer from the South Street Seaport meandering past Battery. The kind of day you needn’t take responsibility for, sitting in the shade, like an elderly citizen, wondering where it all went—the wife and kids, the years of work. Covered over by the waters of the East River. Not a river, a tidal basin, and the tide coming in now, full force, dangerous, looking for me.	15

“Mediation on a Brooklyn Bench” from *The Sights Along the Harbor: New and Collected Poems* © 2006 by Harvey Shapiro. Reprinted by permission of Wesleyan University Press.

Lost Son's Self-Assessment

Abraham Benjamin

Abraham Benjamin, a.k.a. Honest Abe, was born in Brooklyn, NY. He is a spoken word artist who has recently published a book of poems, *Unlocked Thoughts of a Prophet's Temple: Humble Beginnings* as well as the indie album, *Brooklyn's Lost Son: Prelude to the Road 2 Redemption*.

LOST SON'S SELF-ASSESSMENT

In this disease of Nature we call life	1
I've been feeling out of place since birth	
And I've been trying to realize my purpose	
More times than not contemplated suicide	
Now wondering if it's really worth this.	5
To quote one of my brothers in words & knowledge, 'Mar Hill,	
"I didn't choose poetry. Poetry choose Me!!"	
So I was pulled into this	
Through a force of nature I couldn't control	
Was never one to throw stones	10
With my nose to the grindstone	
Since I first touched a microphone.	
At times, the journey has felt so cold,	
So I looked at myself	
At the man in the mirror	15
And asked myself: Am I the only one?	
After all the twists and turns in this roller coaster ride in	
Spoken Word,	
I guess that's why I dubbed myself, "Brooklyn's Lost Son."	
Finding my path on this road to redemption	20
To finally accept the solace of my mind, body, soul,	
I was taught to speak my mind	
Even if it meant being so damn bold!	
Trying to rebuild the bridges	
I done burned,	25
Hoping the Almighty and Universe offer a	
Clean slate.	

Reprinted by permission of Abraham Benjamin.

Burn notices tend to leave scars of life lessons
When they've been nailed to your chest
By the hammer of Karma, 30
So you can endure the next test
Of change you need to make, and to change the needs to come.
Father Time seems to play the role of universal parent and
Wisdom teacher,
While Mother Nature is the soul doctor 35
Birthing spoken healers like myself
Delivering Flintstone vitamin strength of knowledge
To my people
So you know better in dealing smarter about
Who you play with or who you lay with. 40
The acolytes with swindler sell-out tendencies
Offer to buy your self-worth
With a price high enough to kill
To leave bankrupt your morality
In your memory banks that used to secure them. 45
The doors of opportunity for me—
They've always had loose hinges
Bringing determination with track star kicks.
So when they close too soon with my .44 pen waving, 50
I'd kick them in.
I didn't enter Spoken Word for "Slams" to win;
This is just the vehicle I discovered to repent my sins.
I've been accused as a blasphemer with my words.
But with no remorse to blast FEMA for B.S. 'n after Katrina.
Maybe all this is just the design of a prophet's torment 51
With the pain of the world on his shoulders
And one of the strifes my man Black Ice
Didn't mention of a lone soldier.

Immigrant Mother (Lovely to Me)

Taiyo Na

Honored by Governor David A. Paterson and the State of New York for his “legacy of leadership to the Asian American community and the Empire State” in May 2010, Taiyo Na is a singer, songwriter, MC, and producer. His debut album *Love is Growth* (Issilah Productions, 2008) features the song “Lovely To Me (Immigrant Mother),” whose music video was heralded by MTV’s Iggy as “the realest thing seen in a while.” In June 2010, he released an album *Home: Word* with hip hop duo Magnetic North. The title track off that album was released as a single in Japan in March 2011 and hit #2 on Japan’s iTunes Hip-Hop charts.

IMMIGRANT MOTHER (LOVELY TO ME)

Verse One:	1
I got an immigrant mother, ain’t no one like her	
She struggle everyday so she’s something like a fighter	
See her on the streets carrying loads of groceries	
See her on the streets carrying loads of broken dreams	5
It takes a whole lot to leave your homeland	
And raise a few children with your own hands	
She couldn’t read well, but she could feed well	
With a few hustles on the DL	
Overworked, underpaid, so much my mother gave	10
It’s through her, how I learned love is brave	
Working to the evening, then cooking & cleaning,	
But they straight ignored her at school meetings	
Straight dissin’ her, cuz she speak with an accent	
But under the accent is a heart full of passion	15
You went through the fire to be a mother to me	
Thank you for being so lovely to me	
Chorus:	
You’ve been lovely to me	
A dear mother to me	20
Like no other to me	
Lovely to me, lovely to me	
I got an immigrant mother (Lovely to me)	

Reprinted by permission of Taiyo Na.

Immigrant mother (A dear mother to me)
 Immigrant mother (Like no other to me) 25
 Lovely to me, lovely to me

Verse Two:

She on the subway trying to learn English
 Wishing for her son to be distinguished
 There lots of things she don't know how to say 30
 So immigrant mothers they know how to pray
 But they ain't perfect, and that's what hurt me
 They need some damn help when they all by themselves
 Cuz they'll break down, see my mom was single
 Raised us alone since we was real little 35
 She worked her ass off, Man, I saw it every night
 Passed out on the couch, I tucked her in tight
 But working all the time will make a woman crazy
 And compromise her time with her dear babies
 She got lonely, so she fell for stupid men 40
 Like alcoholics, and I felt ruined then,
 So I stepped up, said, Ma, you acting ugly
 You deserve better cuz you so lovely

Chorus:

You've been lovely to me 45
 A dear mother to me
 Like no other to me
 Lovely to me, lovely to me
 I got an immigrant mother (Lovely to me)
 Immigrant mother (A dear mother to me) 50
 Immigrant mother (Like no other to me)
 Lovely to me, lovely to me

Verse Three:

She smell like cumin, smell like garlic
 Smell like adobo, smell like an artist 55
 INS tests don't know nothing about this
 About babies on your breasts and giving 'em happiness
 About holding your own despite a broken home
 She had no degree but she gave me poetry
 Living through the struggle and giving cuz she loves you 60
 I got an immigrant mother, I sing this cuz I'm humbled

Bridge:

She wakes up in the morning when the birds are loudest
Something about her feels like Mary
She needs strength just like anybody else
So when I see her in the kitchen I offer her my help

65

Chorus:

You've been lovely to me
A dear mother to me
Like no other to me
Lovely to me, lovely to me
I got an immigrant mother (Lovely to me)
Immigrant mother (A dear mother to me)
Immigrant mother (Like no other to me)
Lovely to me, lovely to me

70

75

The Place Where We Dwell

Gang Starr

Gang Starr is a hip hop duo that consisted of Guru and DJ Premier. They were an influential East Coast throughout the 1990s, and during this time, they were recognized as having pioneered the hardcore New York City rap sound. In 2006, Gang Starr split up, and Guru died of a heart attack in 2010. Readers probably have noticed that the lyrics in the song “The Place Where We Dwell,” are also the title of this textbook. Gang Starr mentions many neighborhoods in New York City, as a way to announce their affiliation and connection to place and home.

THE PLACE WHERE WE DWELL

New York, New York is where we live and we're thorough	1
Never taking shorts cuz Brooklyn's the borough	
Peace to Uptown, to queens and the Bronx	
Long Island and Jersey get as fly as they want	
Where we rest is no joke	5
So let me break it down to sections for you slowpokes	
Fort Green, bedstuy, Flatbush, Brownsville	
Crown Heights and East New York will be down till	
Medina takes respect for the style's we bring	
Cuz in Brooklyn, we be into our own thing	10
Alantic terminals, redhook bushwick	
Come to Brooklyn frontin, and you'll get mushed quick	
We ain't just know for flipping and turning out parties	
But also for the take no bullshit hotties	
On the subject of blackness, well let me share this	15
Brooklyn is the home for cultural awareness	
So in all fairness, you can never compare this	
Some good, some bad. Little hope for the weak	
Dangerous streets and Coney Island Beach	
All this included when you go for a tour	20
Some can get scandalous and outright raw	
When you step, step correct and watch where you move	
We pay dues so we ain't trying to lose	
Here in Brooklyn	
The home of the black and the beautiful	25
For a ruffrap sound, ain't a place more suitable	
Other cities claim this, and others claim that	

But let me give some props to the place where we be at
B-R-double O- K-L-Y-N
I came in for a visit and ever since then 30
I've been incorporated with select personel
Right here in Brooklyn, the place where we dwell

Way down in Brooklyn (3x)
Those who live in Brooklyn know just what I'm talking about

Peace to Boston, Philly, Conneticut, DC 35
All the east coast cities are fly to me
Peace to everybody down south and out west
But for me, Brooklyn, New York is the best
Don't be afraid to venture over the bridge
Although you may run in to some wild ass kids 40
Take the j train, the d or the a if you dare
And the 2,3,4,5 also comes here
There's so much to see cuz Brooklyn's historic
Fools act jealous but you have to ignore it
So I just lounge wit the fat clientele 45
Out here in Brooklyn, the place where we dwell

Way down in brooklyn
You know the place...

Central Park, Carousel

Meena Alexander

Meena Alexander was born in Allahabad, India. At eighteen she went to study in England. She is Distinguished Professor of English at the City University of New York and teaches in the MFA program at Hunter College and the Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center. "Central Park, Carousel" is a post-9/11 poem that is inspired by the Hindu idea of *dukham*, which means sorrow experienced in the cycle of births and rebirths.

CENTRAL PARK, CAROUSEL

June already, it's your birth month, nine months since the towers fell.	1
I set olive twigs in my hair torn from a tree in Central Park, I ride a painted horse, its mane a sullen wonder.	5
You are behind me on a lilting mare. You whisper—What of happiness? <i>Dukham</i> , Federico. Smoke fills my eyes. Young, I was raised to a sorrow song short fires and stubble on a monsoon coast.	10
The leaves in your cap are very green. The eyes of your mare never close. Somewhere you wrote: <i>Despedida</i> . <i>If I die leave the balcony open!</i>	

From *Raw Silk* by Meena Alexander. Copyright © 2004 by Meena Alexander. Published in 2004 and reprinted by permission of TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press. All rights reserved.

Life in the New World

George Guida

George Guida is the author of four books, including *The Pope Stories and Other Tales of Troubled Times* (forthcoming). His fiction, poetry, and criticism appear in many journals and anthologies. He is also a playwright and a popular and enthusiastic performer of his work. Guida is an Associate Professor of English at New York City College of Technology, the Poetry Editor of *2 Bridges Review*, and the President of the American Italian Historical Association.

LIFE IN THE NEW WORLD

I.	
We are westbound,	1
a background of Brooklyn and Queens,	
cell phones to ears for gleaning.	
Rogue planes, jet fuel,	
an absence of planted bombs	5
are rudely interrupting Manhattan.	
The World Trade Center, like Godzilla,	
absorbs suicide shrapnel,	
as office managers' shrieks and roars	
charge the autumn morning air.	10
Poets wait eternities for tragedies like this.	
Aboard a bedroom community railroad,	
I am only remotely connected.	
An obese woman waving cell phone	
invading my seat, claims	15
they want everyone out of the city.	
I wonder where they all will go,	
if they can risk suburban shelter.	
At a time like this,	
what becomes of Brooklyn	20
between those who see	
Manhattan as symbol of America,	
all triumphs and crimes laid bare to the world,	
and those who see Manhattan as,	
of all things, tourist Mecca?	25

Reprinted by permission of George Guida.

A dusky, turbaned man across the aisle,
 a regular commuter in intermittent dialogue
 with a cherry-white office woman
 dialing like mad for answers to her question,
 "Will I get the day off?" 30
 reads the gentle Arabic pen strokes
 of a pocket-sized Koran.
 At a time like this,
 what becomes of him
 aboard this middle-class car? 35
 Sudden subject of suspicion,
 he chats in unaccented American
 with the conductor
 who suddenly can't remember
 the next train out. 40
 Arrived in Brooklyn, I hear
 the mayor has ordered us away.
 Fleeing, watching the skyline die
 in the distance, how now
 can I wrestle shadows for this world? 45
 How can I tolerate safety,
 when a high school teammate,
 fond, forgotten boy,
 has known the sensation of eighty floors
 trembling beneath him, 50
 intimacy with smooth-skinned death?

II.

The twin towers have fallen,
 and with them an empire of the senses,
 the sense that this New York, new world,
 is eternal, that we will always breath 55
 the autumn air of poets' paeans,
 that the subway will always take us home.
 Everyone loses some beloved,
 some past and future,
 when a steel and glass dream falls. 60
 On the Brooklyn streets, crowds gawk
 at gray smoke,
 at the spectacle of Manhattan,
 as they always have, vigil now.
 A miles-long cloud ribbons New York Harbor, 65
 limiting vision to loss.
 Two arrogant towers in death

suffocate our innocents,
 some spared only by the north wind's mercy.
 Businessmen klatsched to keep from shaking, 70
 speak of death for all immigrants,
 payback for crimes we have all committed.

III.

Escaped, beneath a trestle I am lost
 in suburban sunlight and siren shadow,
 half-witness to death, 75
 to imagined wives and mothers
 imploded like skyscrapers
 that have collapsed our memory of peace,
 in the million pieces that are each one lost
 to plastic explosive anger, 80
 poverty and dire religion.
 I am staring at the suburban sun,
 clinging to faith.
 I pray for the 100th floor jumpers.
 I pray for the acrid smoke inhalers, 85
 for the sad generations
 newly sworn to vengeance.
 Safe in my family home, I opine,
 the sins of the father,
 cross-couch from my own, 90
 retired law enforcer, warrior by taste,
 watching as we watched ten years before
 the smart-strafting of secular sons,
 the hidden slaughter of daughters,
 their misfortune to dream in Arabic, 95
 under a different Sun,
 lost to the blood-lusty cry,
 "Bomb them back to the Stone Age."

IV.

We walk among rubble now,
 as poisonous clouds drift out to sea, 100
 where navy vessels steam
 through red and black spume,
 to rescue us from harm,
 though all the harm to do is done,
 every rumble in the distance 105
 a declaration of war,
 an assault on the ignorant peace of means.

Worst of all is absence:
 of towers, 110
 bankers,
 secretaries,
 firefighters,
 Arab vendors,
 cops like my father,
 and still here 115
 a callous leader chastened,
 and we, eastbound, ocean-bound,
 finally world-facing,
 absent from our former selves. 120
 White soot-covered zombies
 of the new millennium,
 we wash our hands like Pilate,
 comprehend televised images
 like special effects,
 jumbo jets, American and United, 125
 annihilating our national dream.

V.

We live now in a land
 of detectors, cavity searches,
 and snarling dogs.
 We are the old world reborn. 130
 The new has drifted beyond putrid clouds,
 beyond serene blue skies.
 We speak of death
 as one with attack amnesia
 might speak of Hawaii. 135
 We live now with
 King Kong, the primate,
 beating his chest atop
 the Empire State still upright
 in the distance, a fantasy 140
 of another American time.
 We cling to that tower now,
 through television screens,
 as both heroes and beasts in agony,
 conscious of our place, our dilemma, 145
 and most of all our sense
 that once we had a home.

To speak to you, the dead of September, I must not claim
false intimacy or summon an overheated heart glazed
just in time for a camera. I must be steady and I must be clear, 25
knowing all the time that I have nothing to say—no words
stronger than the steel that pressed you into itself; no scripture
older or more elegant than the ancient atoms you
have become.

And I have nothing to give either—except this gesture, 30
this thread thrown between your humanity and mine;
I want to hold you in my arms and as your soul got shot
of its box of flesh to understand, as you have done, the wit
of eternity: its gift of unhinged release tearing through
the darkness of its knell. 35