

note to self

if all the great poets of the Ages
had refused their voices for fear
had snapped their quills and thrown their scribes &
typewriters from top-story windows,
we would be lost.

we would have no summer days with which to compare thee
no tygers bright no sweet delight
no Xanadu no Kublai Khan
no Clancy and no Overflow
we'd never jazz june
ping the brass spittoon
feel the fog roll in on little cat's feet
or stop by snowy woods
lovely, dark and deep,
and the sidewalk would just end.

there would be more to write but less to say
for fear can hold tongues like a vise
freeze our pens like midwinter ice upon on a wound,
numbing us to what we never knew we'd lost
never reminding us: each new verse is a gift
a pearl in the eye of God
which only hardens and glistens
with the telling.

the new beats

i saw adam downtown today
he wanted a dime
looked up at the building
said he's thinking of jumping
i gave him the quarter
i hope he don't jump.

i saw the troops today
walking in formation,
strutting
through the streets of my town
they passed my window
i didn't wave.

i saw a girl today
she muted me soft
she made me feel like
being found being lost
and i spoke but
she didn't hear.

i saw a child today
barefoot sunshine
flowers in his hair
as he laughed
and sang
without making a sound.

i saw myself today
small in a corner
i saw my hands shaking
my eyes unseeing
searching the sky
looking for light.

i saw john today
he smiled and shrugged
he had no words
for our condition
dropped a carnation
and walked away.

i saw albert today
smoking as usual
chasms his forehead
unsure his soul
i drank his café
he didn't even notice.

i saw jack today
passing through as usual
on his way therewhere
have you seen dean?
lost dharma karma
american feet.

i saw sisiphus today
rolling his hill
sweat-covered back
and i could have sworn
i saw him wink
in the gathering dusk.

Timmy Leary should've known better

I don't take hallucinogens
I declined with a grin

when I want my world to spin
I watch children on the swings &
think of their impending lives

Janie died at 12 in the passenger seat
Joey at 21 in a metal room built by foreigners, underground
Jim had a coronary at 43
 in the corner office with a view of the bridge
Doris, at 87, went surrounded by seventeen grandchildren
 smiling in her sleep

if I want the colors to play games
I stand on any downtown streetcorner
thumbs in my ears and fingers on my eyes &
remove them, only for a second

four yellow striped taxis in pole position
raggedy men stumble into passersby
 they can taste the disdain
silhouettes of birds wheel and cross a jet's silkstream
 they do not disturb each other
too many neon signs in rank and file, each brighter than the next

when I want euphoria
I simply look around

how strange and wonderful to be in this place
reading, listening to words
what a fantastic game of chance we have won
&
how many many more
we have to play

