

JERRY HARP

To The Reader

I would make this poem personal
and include a black willow, hematite,
and a crow. Each would stand apart,
exact, dense, and inarticulate.

You would supply the connections
while the lines proceed as you choose,
with grand sounds or the echoes of sounds.
The connections would begin to shift.

The poem would turn up conceptions
even after you'd turned away.
It would quote Augustine's *Confessions*
and allude to the poems of Kabir.

Returning to it, you might see
it is not at all what you had thought,
but only because you have changed.
This poem would be something you'd forgotten

and that you had not considered before.
Its lines would be sediments of voice.
Now it's late, the traffic is going by
sporadically, and the river

goes depositing shells on its banks.
The poem will not come into your hands.
Already, what it might have been is fading.
These are the traces of its never having been.

After Donald Justice