

## SHORN

Morning. The usual crows. The usual undulating line  
of Paris mountain coming out of the dark or into light,  
take your pick. I'm writing about the shootings again.  
I don't mean to. I don't mean to write  
about writing again, but the mind, shorn of object—  
object of the poem, object of the bullet—doesn't exist.  
It's the choice of object I wonder how people make,  
why some words are enough in how they almost  
don't fail, why some minds, like all minds,  
are never seen, but their invisibility requires  
the extension of invisibility, the extinction of the day  
as it would be. With me in or out of it, this day  
will be itself. I want to be in it, Cho  
wanted to be so deep in time  
that we can never get him out. This is what  
I'm saying: I don't know what I'm saying. I'm saying  
the hero cop was smart, determined, pretty  
on TV last night. She and her men  
went after a sniper, a boy  
who'd shot several people from the roof  
of a mall, circles of blood on their chests, backs,  
reminding me of daubs of paint, pointillist deaths,  
maybe. We were never told if they lived  
or died, the people were props, he was stopped,  
the boy, after she—still smart, determined,  
pretty—said, "shoot the bag," meaning the bag  
of pipe-bombs at his feet, and they did, and he exploded.  
"Columbine" was mentioned but not Virginia Tech.  
We were happy about that, brushed our teeth,  
went to bed. Morning. The usual wondering  
how one thing signifies another, where is the pure instance

29

Bob Hicok

of mind, of me, of crow, going on about,  
what is it that crows go on about? I had it,  
a moment ago, a sense that I could see through time  
and language, through my face, the mountain,  
through the caws of crows to what abides within loss  
other than waste, injury, harm,  
like a painting of a battle that has a painting  
underneath. Eyes looking up, out,  
at what the painting can't hold, wasn't asked to,  
taking our eyes away from a woman  
we don't want to turn away from, as if she knew,  
or the artist, or beauty itself  
needed to tell us that below death, below anything,  
there's nothing to see but the feeling  
that we can see. Here you might recognize language  
as one of the ways to end a poem. Pretend you treat it  
as I do now; a menu of sticks, a blaze I keep asking  
to be my body, a clock.