

NEGATIVE CONFESSION

I razor-slit three tick-sized hits
of Emerald Pyramid
for five of us, and underneath
a hair-line crack in the dusk, pure space had broken through
with every dream we ever
meant to be tinturing the fire-pond crimson.
One afterlife and the next
seeping away, even the one
called Shame. Phantasmal,
unremembering, we all tried to act
as if everything were normal,
while the windowed end
of the world began again,
a few last blackbirds
thrown across the cornfields
like something torn from earth,
beyond our cool quiet
and the skeletal sycamores,
into the orphanage
called Twilight.

That October sunset
looked us all spacy in the eyes
and told us we would never die
except to dread and wonder.
Twenty years later, if telling
resurrects, then listen O my heart, for we
did not want a peaceful afterlife.
In the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*
at judgment the heart is placed
on a brass balance
and weighed
against the Feather of Truth.

This is when, if you are lucky, your heart refuses
to testify against itself.
You never asked your servants to work
past dawn,
nor caught fishes with bait
of their own bodies, nor
set the homeless on fire.
You never cursed your past
except in shame,
to yourself.

I think I was afraid our best
highest intentions
wouldn't outweigh a feather.
We held in dead smoke till the seahorse exhalations
swam around the Chinese lantern
while the oaks,
brazen with blackbirds,
sang us down from heaven
twenty years ago.
Their shadows threw themselves past us
as if we were stubble.
Where in the afterlife
of saying so
are my almost friends? O my deaf heart,
why confess to you?
Could you ever
lie for me, lay me down cold,
lie down in a jar of wine
and still refuse
the safety of dying?