

Friday Afternoon Lecture

The preclass chatter continues undistinguished,
But when he turns to us and begins his lecture in earnest,
I listen.

My colleagues let his words slip off their skin.
They burrow under mine.

As if he takes his lecture to the blood bank of our minds,
And, finding the doors locked, slits his wrists,
Leaving a puddle at the door.

He says, "Once I also set off to become a great writer."
But now he offers his failure as humor and
Mentions offhandedly that
His father was "a newspaper man."

The cult figure towering over his youth is alive
And he tells us how he met the man in a bar in Paris;
How he followed him from streetlight to streetlight.

Our heroes are the same if not in name.
And with the immortalization delivered by a shotgun blast
The child in his eyes dies,
Left for his wife to find in the morning,
And wonder if he was some species of hero.

As the bell ending class tolls in the hall
I sit in the long deserted classroom,
Still wanting to applaud.

John Ledges