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Gold Wake Press, 2008

Memphis

*“Question: Do you believe in the supernatural?
Elvis Costello: I once saw Al Green.”*

Poplar Avenue

Runs like an aorta
from the river
to Alabama.
Its sidewalks are made
of gypsum.
Its lines waver like the
lines of a poem.
Down its center comes
the parade.
The emperor drives
its penultimate float
The last float
will be empty,
to be filled in later.
Later, the parade will
stop at the gates.
It will be unclear whether
someone gets
on or someone gets off.

Music

Underneath the everyday
a bass line runs.
The streets are alive with
drifters, angels
in search of jubilee.
Along Madison Avenue
one can see the
gypsies with their instruments.
They are headed for
the big roundup,
the last time The Omniety will sit
down and let loose.
The Big Guy will sit in, invited
by Reverend Green.
The number chosen will be
everyone's number.
They will call everyone's number.

The Pyramid

At great expense they built it.
Our city, which has seen the death
of kings, built it at great expense.
Now it sits emptied of possibility,
another ghost building, another tumulus.

The River, Of Course

The river,
of course,
flows through our dream city,
swollen with
myth and brown
like our first memory of brown.
We sometimes
have to go there.
We sometimes have to watch
its inevitability,
its *force majeure*,
its insistence on movement.
We watch
as if
the river carried our best hopes
away, or
perhaps, sometimes,
just ourselves,
our uprooted selves.

Graceland

I went to scoff and, chastened,
stayed to pray. I prayed
that there would be something
at the end for all of us,
something more than a cold
bathroom floor. Someone
handed me a candle, already lit.
Someone handed me a poem.