To a Blind Student Who Taught Me to See

More reminiscent than distressed, you say you recollect the pain of sight as I might dream of buried men whose living hands I shook, faces I knew, voices I heard and hear again when I remember them. You feel no urge to resurrect one day when you could see a stucco chimney webbed with rosevines, trios of basted, browning hens revolving slowly backward on a spit, the way a collie’s torso thrust ahead and instantly recoiled from its bark. You claim the world is nearer in the dark.

This makes me think that Oedipus was blind before he gouged his eyeballs from skull. No longer blinded by the visible, he turned two hollow sockets on a dusk of light he had to blind himself to see. I draw from this that only in the mind is there a world, and never two the same, that blind men walk with cautious dignity partly from need, partly because they know the single world is multiple as men’s imaginings, that streets are nothing but the way we picture them, that doors can shut or open if we twist the keys or not. Your blindness makes me memorize with you the accidental braille of time and place until I see how Homer saw a world of iliads and odysseys arise like magic to the tapping cane of thought.

Samuel Hazo

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