

The Profession

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“dilemma of memory” *

indeed

since they've gone

my memory is theirs

theirs is mine

siamese twins recoiling

from the knife

too much heart and bone

that beat and think as one

tellings permanent and vivid

as thick as space and time

i have pains in my leg

where emptiness resides

while smiles multiply as

kindness is all there is to

temper what comes of grief

i have always cried a lot

have always smiled a lot

have grieved as my mother

between the laughter

without grief there is no memory

without memory the disappeared

disappear

everyone cries at graduations

when the baby pictures appear

at weddings when two people dance

at star-crossed scenes in West Side Story

i keep seeing missing people

hoping to catch a glimpse

of what they've missed

as if Tony and Maria weren't sad enough
i keep seeing Mara belly round
with new life butchered
before the eyes of her mother
and mine, her sister
and all i can think of
is her young husband
(no name remaining)
murdered for shiny boots
not quick enough unshod

i see them all everywhere
as if the deaths of
the last amongst you
would stop
the world's knowing
(and it has)

I would retire from this profession
the work of taking up your memory
as my own
(but I can't)

Dilemma of Memory - an art and poetry exhibit at HHRC in the Fall of 2014
(Michael Klahr Holocaust Human Rights Center of Maine at University of Maine-Augusta)