

Abacus

the bead of Dead Sea water : oblate and spherical : clung tightly as it rolled off my leg and bounced on the towel : and I discerned from the corner of my eye : whosoever covers herself like that always shelters in desperation : desperate remove from herself : like the decimation at Masada : a turn inward from which we are still recovering : eyes all around here : where the diversion itself is a kind of epiphenomenal joy : not so much floating as I was lifted upon the demisurface of the water by multitudes : for a fleeting moment : the boy doubled up & embracing his legs : a sign of extreme joy or extreme grief : and all of us so many grains of sand : insoluble : countable, unlike dust : as countable as all the stars in the dark sky of old : a grain of sand at arm's length eclipsing one of those long-dead stars : sand from stone ground to smaller segments : to what, we may ask, is the Dead Sea returning? : once the water departs to what does *Dead Sea* refer? : the memory abides though the referent is lost : to what does *the memory* refer : to what does *the memory* reduce? : seeing especially as no event lasts more than a zenonic *moment* other than by beading on a string : with countless intervening ellipses : a memory refers : as the Sea refers : as a *numeral* refers to a *number* : take the instant that is the abiding memory of the evaporating circle of mist on the window's glass as her lips receded : back to the drawing slate : the salt teardrops that the water left on my trunks as it evaporated : threaded me home to the relics of sweat : on the shirt I could not wash after her death : streaks of fossilized rain : but *home* : as the homing pigeon : homing in in a gyre : tells us : can not only be reached again : but in fact can never be left : since the periphery of one's home can diminish but remain home : the fences retreat : the boundary shrinks : until it is no longer a boundary : and one's abode has shrunk to the surface of the skin : *home is where the skin is* : and there is no escaping that home : like the smell of one's own waterless sweat in the desert : the sorrow of dwelling in oneself : the sorrow that we try so hard to convey to others : to shake out that pebble of soul : to hold up our pinhead for his eyeball's planet-sized scrutiny : and now in this sun-burdened day : the flutter of dust in the wind falling from Herod's distant cliff-top abode : mingling with the sand scoured from our towels as we depart : to the counting of our footprints in the sand