

1970

ABC

Donald Justice

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A B C

A     A syllable with skin,  
          tough and saurian,  
          alive in the sewer's mouth.

A word with loot  
      bulging its pockets,  
      crouched in the alley after curfew.

A whole stanza forming  
      to march off the curb  
      and into your head with banners.

A poem in hiding  
      from men in advertising  
      and the guitars of ex-pilots.

B     Be the unfolding page,  
          white page, memorial to the absolute,  
          atlas of heights and depths,

Be the statue leaning out from the stone,  
      the stone also, torn between past and future,  
      and the hammer, whose strength we share,

Be the cry at whose center silence is,  
      and the silence itself,  
      already moving outward in slow circles.

C     See the fearful chandelier  
          that trembles above you  
          each time you open your mouth  
          to sing. Sing.

See the trampled way  
      beside the abyss your mouth is,  
      from which the high note rises  
      of someone falling, falling.