1973

Double Negative

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A soundless wind lifted
the dreamed jig-saw pieces
of the world, then let them fall
to lodge in the black ground of sleep:
yellow, bright blue, brown
and green, orange and pink gravestones
leaning at every angle:
contours and colors compliments
of the mad. Waking, the dreamer
is furnished every reason not to sleep.
Fearing death, he fears torture
more, but even silence has risks
by accident: the police talk
to a neighbor, a man disappears.
He tangles "no" with "not" and "not at all,"
imagines unkissable bullet hole
mouths marching across his wall.
His leaping sheep fall bloody
to a butcher. Red-eyed at dawn
he stares out the window
at the world cohering as smoke
blossoming up, like smoke
from the camps and burning cities,
to be flowers for the grave in air
of the first man who took Nothing
for an answer. He will choose now,
his "no" incommensurate against theirs,
knowing nothing fits but Nothing.