

from The Fall in America

Dear Alan I think I left my pocket calculator
at your place on Ave C & 9th
above the salsa club
which nightly lit a fire in the street
below that lovely moon that floated up
out of dirty water below the Williamsburg Bridge
to hang above the burnt-out tenements
till dawn's morning traffic of the mind
& the bakeries of the heart whose bagel odours
wake us before we sleep. Keep it.
I still have the music I didn't ask for either.
The dairy-owner locks his door & leans against the freezer
I write that not just for the image in it
but for the sensation of language melting on ice
I'm not afraid I'm just losing heart
this isn't the last goodbye, not where music calls us
to face one more time & one more
the fascism of the nonageing body
eloquence like dentures & that terrible smile
of fucked-up hope gone just friendly.
Adrenalin fountains from the Centre of the Subtle Body
a deluge of dirty water chops the earth in half
& see where the moon rises one more time & one more
above the burnt-out tenements
the fire in the street
the salsa music that wakes us before we sleep.
The other day the local priest drove past the cold bus-stop
with his lap dog. There's still time
to light a fire in the street
to dance upon the embers
one more time & one more
till dawn drives in the drummers.
This isn't the last goodbye. For you
a whole new raft of images
sailing off to the raw deals the gulags of future.

It was "the Fall". A moth flies at stars.
I write that also for the vowels rising through it
like the moon from dirty whirlpools below the Williamsburg Bridge
smoke of music into spaces between stars
fountain from the Centre of the Subtle Body
whatever acids history serves us to fling
that morning "the sun rose in the west"
like a dream reaching for morning.
And now I have to tell you
Phil Clairmont hung himself last Sunday
I hear the trees of the world falling
one by one with a sound of trapped wings
stripping paradise of its camouflage
in the foreign city of two minds
where now I begin to revolve like a beacon
in the midst of dangers
a moth flies at stars
like a dream reaching for morning
that morning the sun rose in the west
or like the smoke of music
the soul seeks the spaces between stars
light a fire in the street for him
dance upon the embers
& keep the pocket calculator
I'm counting on my fingers now
one more time & one more
this isn't the last goodbye.

To Alan Brunton, poet, in New York City
"to" New York, Lower East, '83
in memoriam Philip Clairmont, artist, hanged himself in Auckland
Sunday 13 May 1984

IAN WEDDE