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After the Ashbery Reading

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AFTER THE ASHBERY READING

I step out to a Denver evening neither beginning nor ending, unsure if the words I hear around me, bubbling up to chorus and refrain, mean anything more than nothing *Did you understand what he was saying?—Every word?* Moments before, the poet, looking up from the podium, confused and unsure of who we were, prefaced his last piece with an anecdote; but then abruptly said, *I don't know why I'm telling you this...* Is it something in the passage from clarity to possibility that makes us certain of the surface of our lives we pass so smoothly over, when what it was we wanted was so far lost, out in the cold? What explains what we come to in passing? I can't separate myself from this business. Even if I wanted, I could not turn to the stranger beside me on the street, and tell her how the dark consumes worlds within words within worlds, each uncertain as before.