

One always notices death

One always notices death foraging about
the walls and doors, forcing his damp snout
into the likeliest sweet-smelling area-ways
of our lives. And though some people say
they want to do him in, I'd miss the old
fellow; I've grown that used to his cold
sleekness trailing me a few respectful paces
to the rear, the way he makes such wrathful faces
when I deliberately ignore him and pretend
he's someone else's sub-canine friend who
lost his bloody way in the park. But he's too
patient to take offense; and when we meet,
finally, he'll just take a turn about my feet
and end up nuzzling my mouth and eyes to sleep,
like a tired old hound with an appointment to keep.

--Lee Jacobus

To My Friend Who Is A Negro Poet

No lyre for him, an honest drum. He'll bang
In Connemara cloth and olive drab.
We think it was the God who twisted Job,
That made him black and bade him sweetly sing,
Who now, with hands on hips -- a trooper's stance,
Scowls fierce in wonder whence the song of dissonance.

--Stanford Sternlicht