

J.J. STEINFELD

## Three Poems

### 1. Quarrelling with Words

renunciation  
of dissemblance  
and obligations

repudiation  
of poorly phrased lies  
and songless birds

refutation  
of extravagant theories  
and formulas for extinguishment

denunciation  
of renunciation and repudiation  
and don't forget, refutation

a theoretical grasp at holiness  
of spirituality  
and the honesty of songbirds

as complicated and uncomplicated  
as the history of love and lovelessness  
buried in words and wordlessness

## 2. The Blindfold

On the sidewalk  
at the intersection  
of my disillusionment and idealism  
I found a blindfold  
from a long-ago firing squad.  
I brought the blindfold  
close to my eyes  
attempting to negotiate  
with the puzzling madness.  
Who made this piece of cloth?  
Who decided on its sombre colour?  
Who tied it behind the head  
of a fictional character  
who was all too real?  
The bullets?  
Manufactured in a dimness of past  
betrayals and almost forgotten crimes.  
The fingers on the triggers of the guns  
the blindfold, the bullets,  
the immutable sadness.  
The name of the wearer?  
The blindfold does not give  
the name freely.  
A shrill voice: "Ready, aim ..."  
Impossible, not here.  
I attempt to throw the blindfold  
back onto the sidewalk  
but the cloth adheres  
like all the misfortunes of history.

### 3. The Occupation of Time

Not as punishment  
or wild experiment  
but instead of a chained evening  
of contemplating human folly  
and falling into silence  
stare as if staring had meaning:  
stare at a wall  
at the sky  
at confusion and misfortune  
at the edges of a wasted day  
at the eyes of a cheated soul

or, if you fall short of your tasks  
and the staring ceases meaning  
as punishment  
and wild experiment  
become the wall  
the sky  
the confusion and misfortune  
the edges of a wasted day  
the eyes of a cheated soul  
and demand of God  
a full annotated report  
on your lifelong descent.