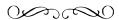
JAMES OWENS

Neither Speech nor Silence

I will love you then by saying your death. Is this a gift, your death a failing gesture in the voice? Awake in the early still-dark, I will beat hollow a grave inside my breathing to bury your death, the frantic muteness, the hallowed word your name to come to void here, a finish. No other rest then, I will be like those cursed who flee when none pursues. A black draft your death will be is already my aphasia. I can barely speak this now but then you will break the wires between words and their referents. This blankness is the cost of touching your death: tree river stone love body light, meaning impossible, forever a gasping toward a no, no room to shape the air into a denial, no shape, words fraying from the mouth, no space for them to travel through.

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ABOUT JAMES OWENS

James Owens is the author of *An Hour is the Doorway* (Black Lawrence Press 2007) and *Frost Lights a Thin Flame* (Mayapple Press 2007). His poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Superstition Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and *The Stinging Fly*. He received an MFA from the University of Alabama and edited *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review* from 2000 to 2003. He lives in Wabash, Indiana, and Massey, Ontario, and blogs at *ein klage-himmel* (circumstanceandmagic.blogspot.com).

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