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## On Meeting Phil Levine After a Reading at Denison University April 6, 1993

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## On Meeting Phil Levine After a Reading at Denison University, April 6, 1993

I am there first, and stare blankly at a white  
tiled wall. White dominoes with no spots, piled  
on end, viewed by the two of us.  
I hear the door open and instinctively look  
to my right, to Phil Levine and to  
the useable urinal beside me.

The man walks in, brown hair with  
gray arrows darting his mustache.  
He smiles, uncomfortably recognizing me;  
and watching me fear watching him as his  
hand falls from his belt, then into his  
brown pants. I am the man with the blue jeans  
and Detroit Tiger baseball cap, worn for the  
man from Hamtramac, in hopes of his notice.

Trying not to look down and right at the same time,  
I change hands, now holding what seems like  
my inadequacy in my right hand, and turning left  
to face the white dominoes above the porcelain sink.  
What do you say to a man who's pissing?  
A man who knows connections, beauty, the majesty  
of words. There was no profound meeting of the minds,  
our connection was basic, two men pissing.

We shake unwashed hands and he shows me  
the Tiger baseball schedule, torn, the paper turning  
to something like frail cotton. 1984, 162 games, the  
Tigers won 106, and there is a W beside each win  
He gave it to me, and to him I give a picture of my brother  
and I shaking hands with Sparky Anderson.  
We joke about running into each other at Tiger stadium,  
before the hero leaves, returning the people wanting  
autographs that make their books, fresh and unworked,  
valuable coffee table pieces.

– Christopher Harnish '94