

1972

Closing

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Closing

my tears stand
center stage
explaining themselves
in lengthy soliloquies.
my friends,
like galley slaves
have raised their hands
like oars
poised to pull me home
and are ready to trade their stinging fingers
for my own encouragement.
i'm a dismayed playwright.
this started as an epic poem,
i scream,
but already the audience
has filled with my old enemies,
old lovers, funeral notices,
pieces of cerebral cortex
strewn about like dinosaur bones.
memory is the message
evolution sends us written on rock;
these are the failures,
unlearnable lessons,
nature's battle with the natural.
i'm nearing extinction.
a beast with carnivorous past
and a brain whose experience
has outgrown its capacity
to understand.
three more clever lines,
another million years
of culture battling the earth's indifference
and i'll see it all quite clearly;
but already the play is ending,
act two was much too long,
the roses backstage are wilted
and drop petals like bloody tears,
the critics are running
to their typewriters to call this
"sentiment for sentiment's sake"
already i'm drafting
a closing notice
with no emotion

Doug Cox '73