**In Two Seconds** Tamir Rice, 2002–2014

                          the boy’s face   
climbed back down the twelve-year tunnel

of its becoming, a charcoal sunflower   
swallowing itself. Who has eyes to see,

or ears to hear? If you could see   
what happens fastest, unmaking

the human irreplaceable, a star   
falling into complete gravitational

darkness from all points of itself, all this:

the held loved body into which entered   
milk and music, honeying the cells of him:

who sang to him, stroked the nap   
of the scalp, kissed the flesh-knot

after the cord completed its work   
of fueling into him the long history

of those whose suffering  
was made more bearable

by the as-yet-unknown of him,

Credit:

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playing alone in some unthinkable   
future city, a Cleveland,

whatever that might be.   
Two seconds. To elapse:

the arc of joy in the conception bed,  
the labor of hands repeated until

the hands no longer required attention,  
so that as the woman folded

her hopes for him sank into the fabric   
of his shirts and underpants. Down   
  
they go, swirling down into the maw   
of a greater dark. Treasure box,

comic books, pocket knife, bell from a lost cat’s collar,  
why even begin to enumerate them

when behind every tributary   
poured into him comes rushing backward

all he hasn’t been yet. Everything   
that boy could have thought or made,

sung or theorized, built on the quavering   
but continuous structure

that had preceded him sank into   
an absence in the shape of a boy

playing with a plastic gun in a city park   
in Ohio, in the middle of the afternoon.

 When I say two seconds, I don’t mean the time   
it took him to die. I mean the lapse between

the instant the cruiser braked to a halt   
on the grass, between that moment

and the one in which the officer fired his weapon.  
The two seconds taken to assess the situation.

I believe it is part of the work   
of poetry to try on at least  
the moment and skin of another,

for this hour I respectfully decline.

I refuse it. May that officer   
be visited every night of his life  
by an enormity collapsing in front of him

into an incomprehensible bloom,  
and the voice that howls out of it.

 If this is no poem then…

But that voice—erased boy,   
beloved of time, who did nothing   
to no one and became

nothing because of it—I know that voice   
is one of the things we call poetry.  
It isn’t only to his killer he’s speaking.