**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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Date Published:

2016

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.