**POEMS**

**Visions of Desolation: Cleveland 1965 Austin 2012**

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*Ecce homunculus.*

This new blank document
could remain blank
for all I care
to reveal or conceal.

Ask me.
I ain’t sayin’.
Coax me.
My lips are sealed.

I could turn myself inside out.
My soul could slowly spin about.

Spin? Turn? Rotate? Whirl?
Like a chicken on a spit?
Like coffee in a microwave?
Like a top? A dervish? A compact disc?
A vinyl record from my youth?

What would you like me to play?

The needle in the groove works
its wonder in high fidelity,
but faithful to the max to what?

The songs from cheap speakers,
two-bit, sentimental,
still sound good to me.

But who cares?

If I stood naked, who would hear?

My dried voice
is more than quiet
and less than meaningless.

Not a whimper.

"Peanuts, here, four bags for a quarter."

"Buy your rags from Daddy Wags!"

A naïve young
Roman Catholic boy,
Lithuanian-Polish,
thirteen going on ten,
by way of the CTS
(Cleveland Transit System)
Number 35
—“Trowbridge next!” —
after eighteen miles
and fifty minutes
of fading storefronts
run-down bars
reading the same
soon-to-vanish
lexicon of Polish,
Czech, Hungarian,
Irish, Croatian
and now Puerto Rican
names,
steps off
at Lorain Avenue
and 25th Street,
walks from the West Side Market
five blighted city blocks
to the red-brick Jesuit high school,
and sits among other boys,
among, but not with.

What was that shell,
what kind of envelope
kept him sound,
and soundless?

Move, move, move,
you splendid little machine.

Not quite a robot.
What did Eliot really know
about the butt ends of days?

Who can count
the butt ends
of the ways
that life can play
blind man’s bluff
with your soul,
and for keeps?

There isn’t even any key chain.