

# Death of a New Formalist

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Have I been or will I be  
A slave to a new formality

In poetry? West Chester's embrace  
Of its Ariel Dawson name

Defies a caustic label,  
And I would join with "counter-culture" rebels

In a righteous cause—  
Say to raise again poetry's  
Societal estimation—was  
Not the cause's self-titled nobility

In league with white  
Nationalists, whose wretched beliefs  
Of loathsome hate blight  
Society. I also cleave

Association with New Formalism  
For the too common shoddy work  
Buttressing its base—old rhythms  
Recycled with clichés and quirks

Reminiscent of old romantics. Semantic standing  
Of a movement, self-styled or recognized, can be weaponized  
By skillful critical hands, and where I stand  
Can shift as sand and beyond my command  
If I hitch to a plow. But I must hitch. Where now  
To turn—spurn rhyme and forms,  
Like couplets or quatrains, for untamed  
Roaming words, perhaps to build foaming  
Clouds with violent pulsing veins of electric reins  
Guiding furious gallop to storm? Warning

Cautions care because, while I know  
Only some research-worth about these  
Who—while still unorganized—Wilson and Epstein hinted would have poverty  
In language, it's not wise to make enemies  
When you don't have many friends. Those I know better,  
And their forms  
Fill the leaves of every notable tree and  
Sing without restraint. Were active unfettered  
Worder's words as beautiful to my ears as those standard bearer's—whips  
Lashing air, symphonic in cracks and whispers  
Till cutting the vein to pour out  
Dredged emotions, evocative and  
Raw and unfiltered earth and sludge,  
Leaving a mess critics only can sort through—I wouldn't harbor such  
Strong thoughts of traditional poetry.  
This siren call serves as much to  
Rebut those safely anchored in popular esteem—  
More, those who esteem—  
As it does to beckon triremes and sloops  
Searching for safe destination:

*I will not be defined as undefined or a new-old poet captive to form.  
I will write poems I will enjoy reading—  
Often forge-poured, anvil-hammered, stone-sharpened  
In metered verse formed by traditional pressures,  
But certainly not always.  
Melancholy may tree shake and gain me a perch among the leaves—  
So too revolutionary recklessness  
To push, no matter cost, language.  
What I do with words will only be done by me,  
No matter their value,  
No matter how I write or why,  
And certainly not as a New Formalist.*