



I would like to thank the Houston Arts Alliance for making this project possible through their very generous Individual Artist Grant and for helping me re-fall in love with this great city.

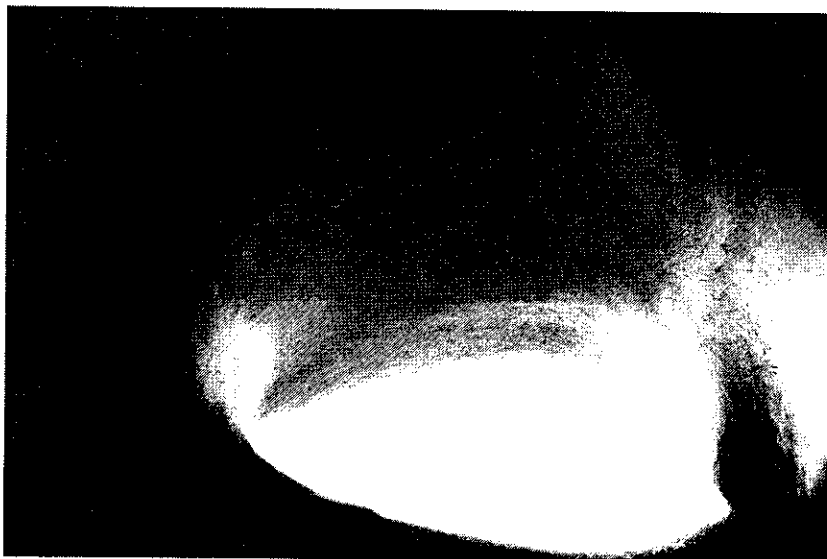
*A Metropolis of Bayou*

By 

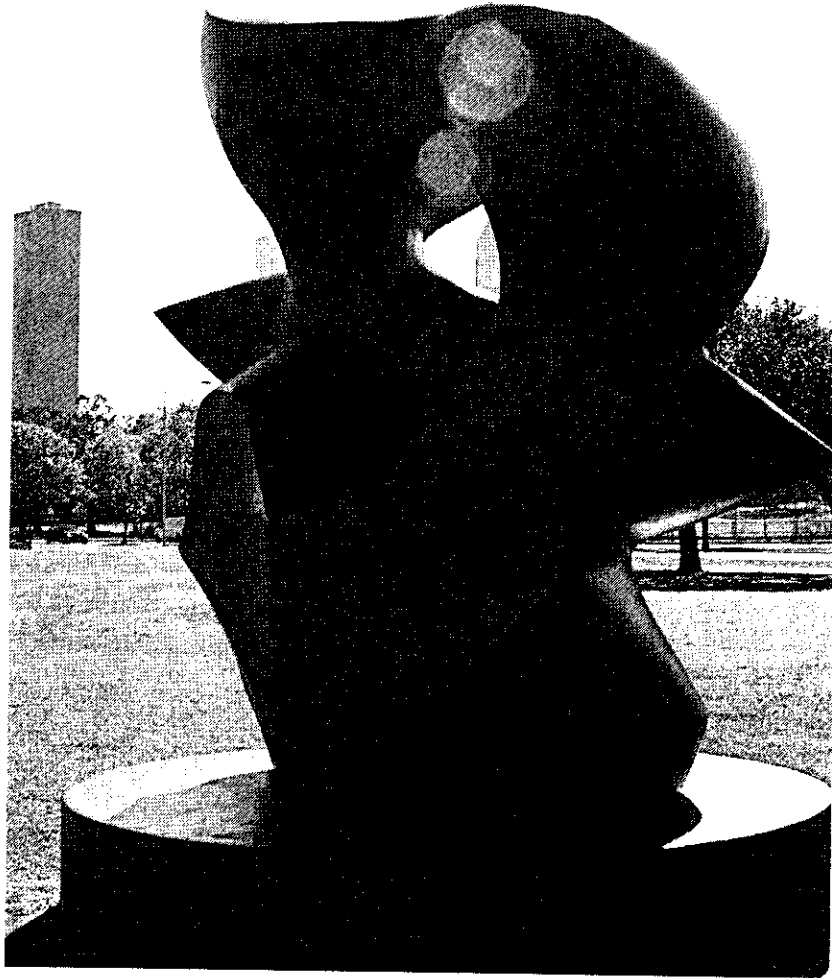
What is it about a hole? Something to be filled.  
To wash through, a thought down a drain.

A conduit?	A piercing between
All of this	and that? From this vantage,
A socket	through the cast bronze
Spindle Piece,	the city of Houston
Skyscrapes	the eastern horizon.

I am drawn downtown into the jut of towers  
Through the central absence of the large metal sculpture.



Through the sluice of what has been removed, a building  
Takes place. The negative space possibilities my sight:  
Breathing room allows the whole  
Breadth to uncivilize the iron  
Template of a belief into the conflict  
Of mystery, inspiration distorted through the nostrils.



On the forth series of panels on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel,  
Between Adam's and God's fingers, there is a space.  
It is where the spark                belies the void separating Adam  
(name derived from Hebrew word meaning *earth*)  
And YHWY (from three verb forms signifying *eternity*).

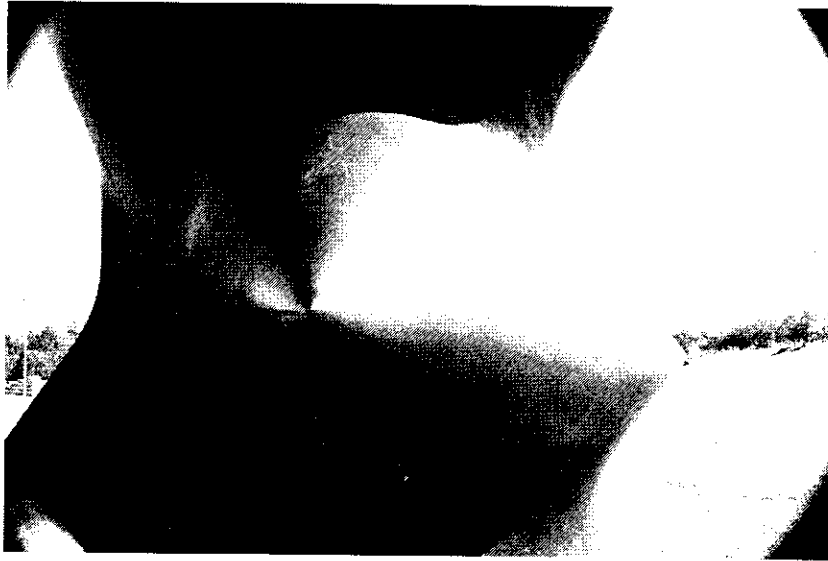
(Moore has said about the theme of his *Large Spindle Piece* in  
relation to Michelangelo's Creation of Adam: "Sculpturally, it's  
two points just about to meet. This work is on the same theme,  
only the two fingers are going out, not in".)





What if the point is missed, missing, erased?  
What if my fingers are crossed? What if that  
Is the point? What if,           blackened inside a hole,  
The city of everything that is possible is imploded?  
The dome of emptiness is a mosque where  
A leap of faith strings, like a lightning  
Bolt, the mutual attraction of opposites?

(In cell biology, the spindle apparatus is the structure that separates the chromosomes into daughter cells during cell division. The spindle apparatus is ellipsoid and tapers at the ends, spreads out in the middle. At the pointed ends, the spindle poles, microtubules are nucleated.)



An gigantic atom of bronze splitting open. Its energy  
Fissions outward, mushrooming upon the event horizon.  
In the cathedral of the nuclear,                      a divide.  
A hole opens up    in the iron  
Cloud of the air.    The sightline  
Of a city is    leveled  
To a flat plane of skyline silhouetted in the dawning from over  
The vast track of bayou and bay and gulf pronating beyond  
sight.



The city divides its nucleus---the wards suburb out  
Toward Katy, Kingwood, Beaumont, Sugarland.  
The city un-reigns its shackles of highway  
To splitting. We mitosis  
Strip malls and Starbucks.  
The bayou dissects the genome  
Of buildings. Centerpoint Energies transform in fits  
And spurts along I-10. The molten bronze patina  
Of afternoon spindles upon the sheen of the city.



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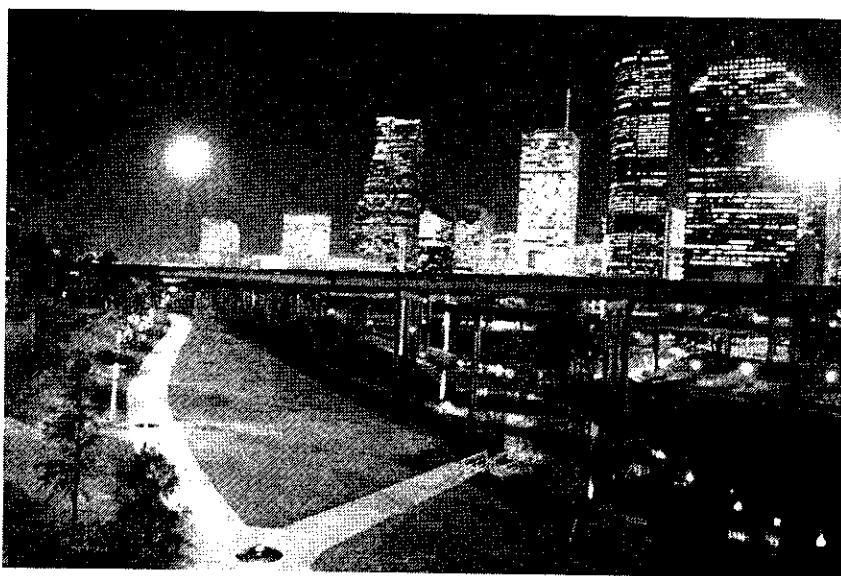




The bayou sidewinds the city, transoms the runoff  
Of millions of daydreams and the stories of windows  
Mirroring among the infinity of Texas sky. I follow  
It as it unspindles its way along the memorial of green  
Parkway toward the Chase of steel and glass. This  
Is the space that connects the wards of Houston  
With the gulf of the rest of the world.

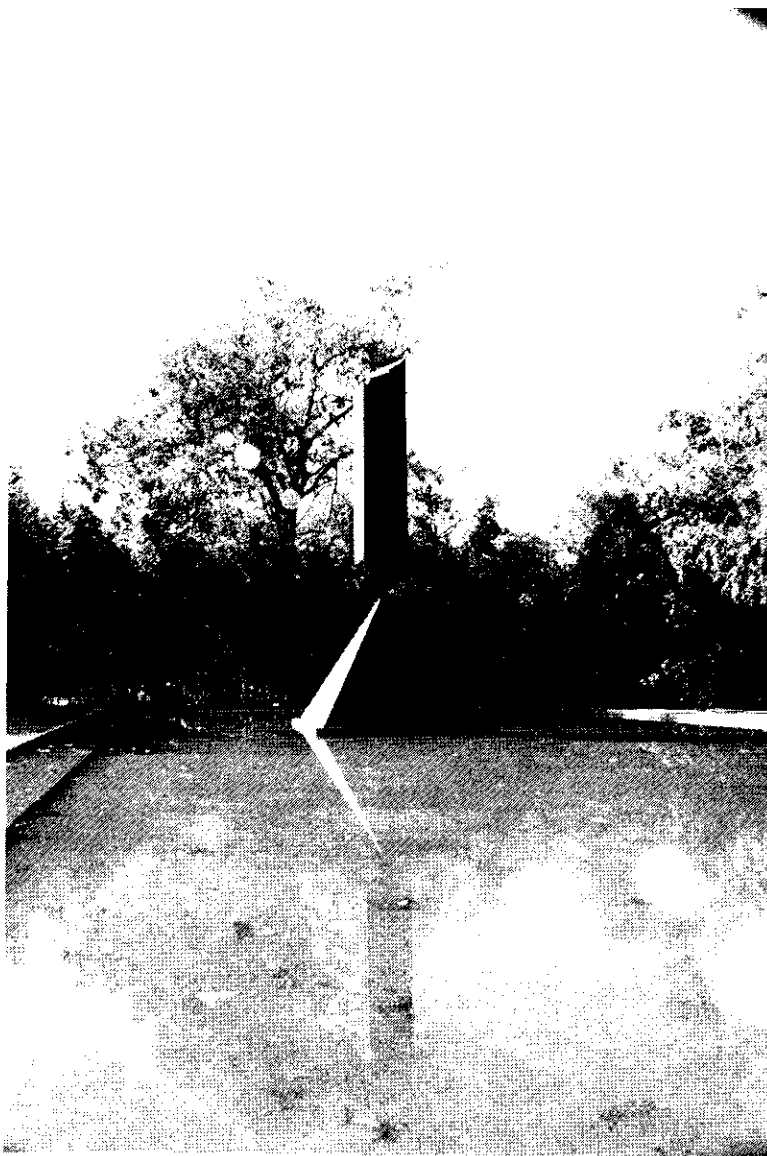


The bayou habited the city, drains through it, cuts  
A swath from the Katy Prairie, underneath the artery  
Of highway and beltway, parries into the Turning  
Basin where it Enrons among the ash of City Hall  
In Market Square and strikes a center through  
The babble of traffic and upward climb of steel  
And mortar towers all the way to the ship channel  
Where it discards its bronze patina and history  
Of everyday use beyond the risen obelisks of city.



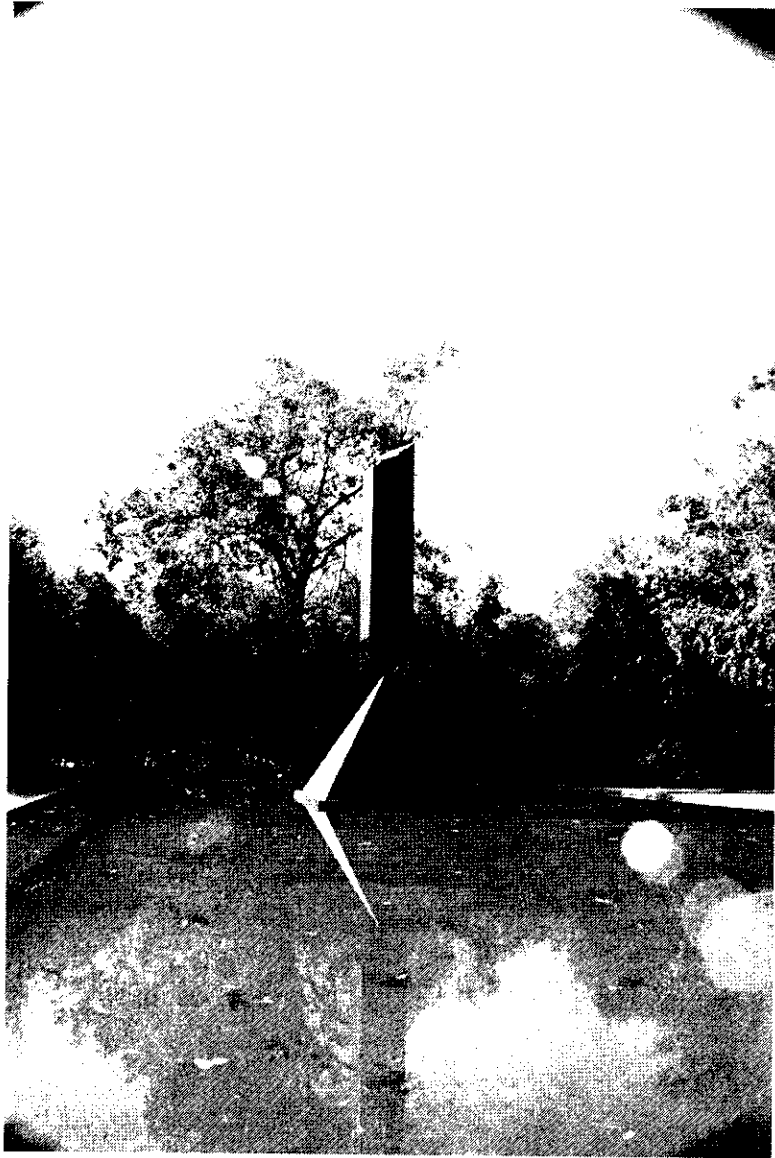
It sits upside down  
in a reflecting pool,  
rusting into the color  
of bayou, corroded hue  
of girders and rebar; its  
Monolith of urban  
aspiration rebirths  
a manufactured age—  
*tabula rasis* piercing  
the sky (whitewashed  
each morning by sun)  
and daily re-inking  
long shadows across a  
mesa of earth. An air  
conditioned  
building  
has  
no  
memory-  
a fractured  
monument over-  
whelming a ruined pyramid  
of republic and sand and crude oil.

Barnett Newman once said of his sculpture, "The Obelisk is concerned with life and I hope that I have transformed its tragic content into a glimpse of the sublime."



I want my reckoning to pierce  
the platform of this world,  
sword into stone, to harrow  
like a ray of light the buried  
darkness. A pillar of heat  
rising into the hurt of blue,  
the vast plain of Texas sky,  
From the grates of the city.  
I want to manufacture  
a new Life, a high-rise,  
a Houston, From  
The detritus  
of my  
living:  
broken vows;  
the non-biodegradable  
of memory and damage;  
landfill Of old poems, promises,  
bedsheets, Lies: all the times I said  
*I love you* And did not mean it. I want  
a new construct of my story, sparkling  
edifice, a pastless history risen From the bayou of my run-off.

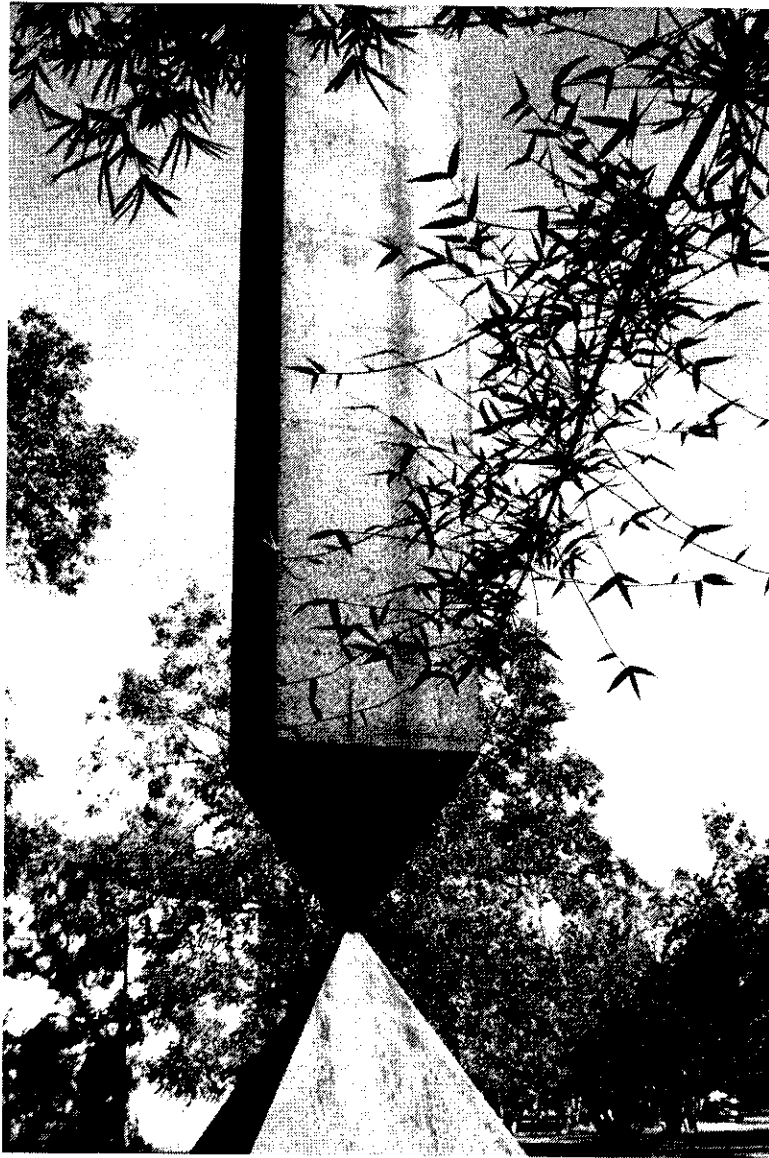
According to Pliny, Egyptian obelisks represented one or  
several rays of the sun. The obelisk was also a fertility symbol,  
representing the cultic significance and power of the sun-god.





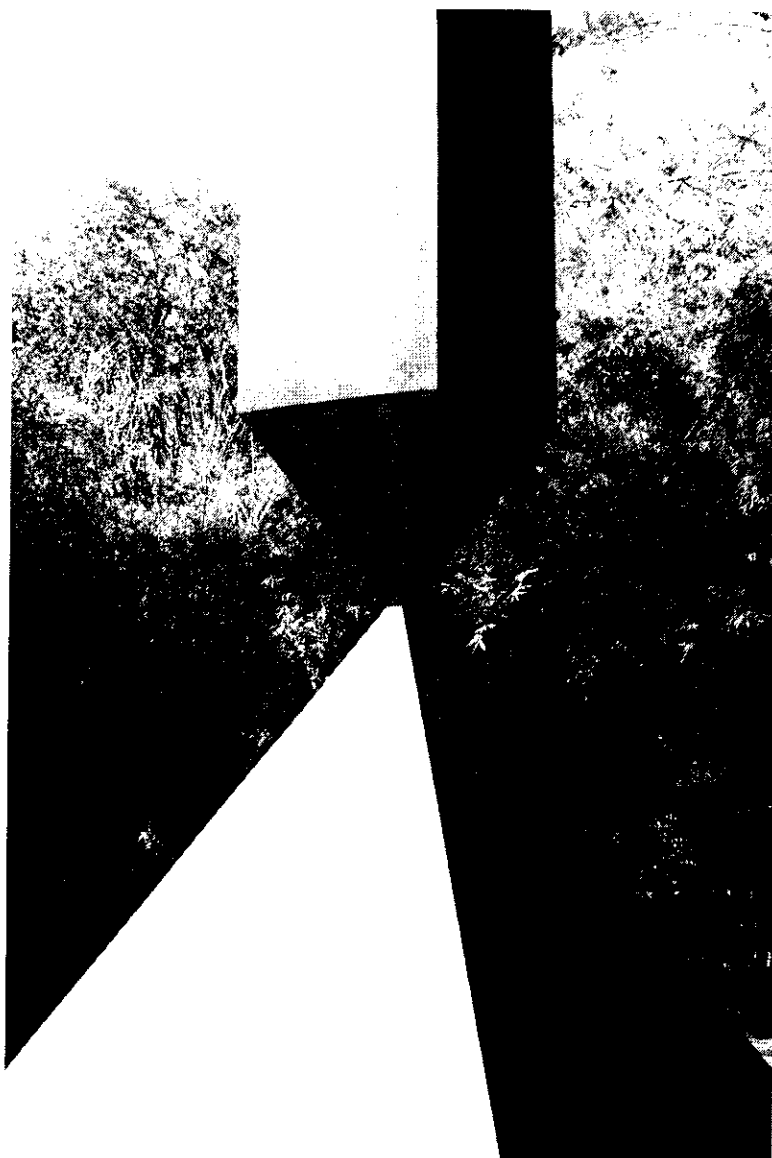
I want the sheath of knowing.  
To enter like a sunbeam an en-  
casement of water and be sured  
there, suspended in its cradle,  
outlasting the front of sky  
and rock. Or no. To rinse  
of the debris of mortar and  
ideology and rise, even broken,  
out of the mirage of an eternal  
horizon, and altar, in the babble  
of marsh, a lofty edifice,  
a façade that scrapes  
the very thought  
of heaven  
to a  
point-  
less-ness.  
built upon the dead  
limbs, leaves, husks, stone, creeks, dust

blown out window panes, the elysium of heroes and oil, the idea  
of eternal plenty, the cemetery of memories, the adulterated  
mattresses of dreams gone the way of the boot, the dogma of  
fast food and stars, the stripes down my back of what I sold  
cheap, the crude well of reason, the ethnics of separation, the  
cleansing of lifetimes of dirty dishes, heaps of shattered  
stoneware



Broken Obelisk alludes to Michelangelo's most famous image—that of God reaching to touch the finger of the inert Adam with His own and infuse His creation with life. Newman's forms touch at the triangular apexes of the pyramid and the pyramidion, or small pyramid, of the obelisk to create a dramatic central focus in the sculpture.

A cross with its arm torn off.  
A limbless oak. A blank totem.  
A balancing act upon a pyramid.  
Or better yet, a spike teetering  
atop a polyhedron, matrix of cinder  
block. I imagine, painstakingly  
arranged to usher the fuel of spirit  
toward the heavens. Or maybe  
a divining rod pointing the way  
down to a trove of petroleum—  
the fluid soul of the dead,  
the exegesis of living,  
a product of  
the first law  
of  
thermo-  
dynamics.  
I light my cigarette.  
Inhale. Exhale. I blow smoke.  
I snuff out the ember, the burning ash.



As Polcari states: Newman's sculpture actually represents the confluence of three streams of thought, both individual and historical: the modern memorialization and monumentalization of the dead, especially the war dead; widespread high and low imagery of regeneration amid disaster during and after the interwar crisis years and the Second World War; and Newman's symbolization of the cycle of human life and death.

The long headstone of the past  
rent at the base, toppled, stands  
on its head; the remembered  
leak back out on the wrist of  
earth: the crown stakes the ground,  
swelling the plot upon the vista—  
a lump in the throat, Adam's apple,  
grandiose hive upon which is  
erected the tarnished pillar  
of the future. There is rust  
in my mouth. The rivets  
    pop their eyes.  
    The whole  
        thing  
        aspirates  
    in a syllable that forsakes  
the crux of touching, inducing  
afterward a pregnant pause, a waiting  
for whether it was a first word or last.

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