

the unalterable permanence

for Aaron Swartz

*when I first heard, I assumed
he must have blinked
right out of existence here
one minute gone the next now
you see him now you don't
this little piggy went to
market and this little piggy*

*hung himself by his own
belt til the leather
stretched and the rubber
soles grazed the floor
boards til the blood began
to pool and the hands grew
plump and purple and the face. . . .*

When someone's dead, every punch
becomes a desperate embrace and
you're the sad, sobbing sucker.

*when I first heard, I assumed
he must not have had it
in him what a terrible thing to
think what a tragedy or what
was he thinking anyway
did he remember the
pact we made each other and
the world or that after months
of messages sent by
wire and avatar we would
see each other the very next. . . .*

Alive,
he took up no space at all.
He was a shrimp of a boy.

Dead,
he was a martyr and an angel.
He was larger than life.

The thing is, when someone
dies, the annoying shit they
did becomes quaint.

You can no longer say
he had a fear of haircuts
and a constitutional aversion
to laundry, that he
let his fingernails grow like a
cokehead and name-dropped
like a member of the bourgeoisie,
that he was a technocrat and a
spoiled brat and equated the
quality of life with the
quantity of death, that he aspired
to greatness on his own terms
and loved like a motherfucker.

*when I first heard, I assumed
he must have made a huge
mistake that it was all just one
big mistake and if I could wrap
my head around it put it in
perspective straighten it out but
it's useless or else I'm still trying
to unravel it and everything
he was to me which it turns out
was a lot and he really did
make a huge mistake and every
day I realize more and more how
huge how purple how plump. . . .*

He had a deep fear of becoming fat.
Not flattering, I know, but I think
he would have hated that the most.
The bloating, you know? Well, that
and the unalterable permanence.

Shaunalynn Duffy

A Pressed Wafer Broadside