

Big City Speech

By W. S. Di Piero

Use me

Abuse me

Turn wheels of fire
on manhole hotheads

Sing me

Sour me

Secrete dark matter's sheen
on our smarting skin

Rise and shine

In puddle shallows

under every Meryl Cheryl Caleb Syd
sommambulists and sleepyheads

Wake us

Speak to us

Bless what you've nurtured in your pits
the rats voles roaches and all outlivers
of your obscene ethic and politics

Crawl on us

Fall on us

you elevations that break and vein
down to sulfuric fiber-optic wrecks
through drill-bit dirt to bedrock

Beat our brows

Flee our sorrows

Sleep tight with your ultraviolets
righteous mica and drainage seeps

your gorgeous color-chart container ships
and cab-top numbers squinting in the mist

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W. S. Di Piero was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and received his bachelor's degree from St. Joseph's College and his master's degree from San Francisco State College. He has also had a long teaching career at such universities as Louisiana State University, Northwestern University, and Stanford University, where he still teaches. Di Piero was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2001. He often writes about growing up in his neighborhood of South Philadelphia, and the Italian-American working class families who largely populated the area.