

In Memory of Joe Brainard

By Frank Bidart

*the remnant of a vast, oceanic
bruise (wound delivered early and long ago)*

*was in you purity and
sweetness self-gathered, CHOSEN*

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When I tried to find words for the moral sense that unifies
and sweetens the country voices in your collage *The Friendly Way*,

you said *It's a code*.

You were a code
I yearned to decipher.—

In the end, the plague that full swift runs by
took you, broke you;—

*in the end, could not
take you, did not break you—*

you had somehow erased within you not only
meanness, but anger, the desire to punish
the universe for everything

not achieved, not tasted, seen again, touched—;

... the undecipherable
code unbroken even as the soul

learns once again the body it loves and hates is
made of earth, and will betray it.

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Source: *Desire* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997)



Frank Bidart grew up in Bakersfield, California, and was, he claims, infected from earliest youth onward with the dream of making great movies. While the choice of expressive medium has changed over the years, the impulse toward a dramatic staging of material has not. Bidart lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and teaches at Wellesley College and Brandeis University.