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## Inventory

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## Inventory

Blurred in the more-than-half-gone afternoon  
is the thought that someone will count  
all the steel made in Bethlehem, PA on this day  
and that someone else will weigh the black froth  
shot into the air from the coke plants in Coplay  
to determine if it makes any difference.  
Someone will count all the shoes manufactured  
in St. Louis at the one factory still open  
because it pays a low enough wage,  
and someone else will count the shoes  
washed up on the Illinois side of the river  
where they once counted slaves  
who fled the cages on Court House Square.  
Elie Wiesel once remarked that the lists of the murdered  
were carefully enumerated; also, that the children of killers  
are not the killers of children.  
Yet they still measure their borders in centimeters.  
In San Jose, California, between the Capitol Shopping Mall  
and the Penitencia Creek Condominiums  
there's an orchard where waves of mustard flowers  
ripple under the blank limbs of walnut trees.  
Someone has measured this ground a foot at a time  
to calculate its value while someone else has measured the rain  
inch by inch to determine whether the landscaping  
at the new Exxon station will be permitted to be green.  
Someone else counts the inhabitants of ditches,  
of abandoned cars, of warehouses and rotted  
hotels, of lean-to's under graffiti soaked bridges,  
and the encampment under the half-built freeway overpass  
where families gather into the rude tribes of the invisible  
that the counters now want to include in the population  
so that the living might once again outnumber the dead.  
Meanwhile, I count the only thing that matters  
as the dying sun extinguishes itself in the Pacific:  
the number of times the loveliest woman I know  
says *not you, not you.*