

## **black pancake**

a beautiful laundromat  
in newburg new york  
laundronaise tumblenaise  
surrounded on all sides by  
abandoned buildings that mirror  
the vacant, empty stares  
and downward glares of chicano shadows

there is no peace on Rt. 9w  
in newburg, New york  
between south miller street  
and keaton avenue  
with rain and storm clouds approaching  
the stiffling hot, muggy air  
has settled on the other side  
of the laundry's glass doors  
waiting for me, waiting,  
waiting for me to sweat buckets  
taking my small laundry load fifteen feet to my car

the endless television culture  
of the laundromat seems  
jarred at my presence  
an outsider with no ties to the laundry machines  
and no ties to the  
kleen klub kulture  
of newburg and south miller

now the skies darken  
and the storm inching up the hudson  
is almost upon me  
and the black roiling pancake  
that sits above the laundry  
is almost pitch black

highlighted by the bright blue sky  
that is clearly visible at the far frayed  
edges of this storm cake  
as the sky gets ever, ever blacker  
the painful glare of the  
interior neon illumination devices  
increases and casts its uncomfortable pall  
its uncomfortable whiteness into every corner  
of the empty laundromat  
leaving only the few dryer machines  
to provide the contrapuntal white noise  
in the empty, high-ceilinged store front

and the rain arrives  
sweeps everything before it  
the winds create verticle sheet water that  
walks back and forth  
across the six lane highway  
and buckets, trash cans, cups, empty dorrito's bags  
and a lone collapsed umbrella  
are all swept wildly away down the street,  
a street cleaning strategy  
of cosmic organization

the water in the gutter has turned  
into a racing spillway 12 inches deep  
and half up on the sidewalk  
and on the street side the water is spread out  
and flattened out to the back wheels of  
the cars angle-parked into the curb and  
down the side streets on south miller  
the gushing rooftop rainwater spouts  
have all been torn away  
about half down from their roofs  
and the gushing gravity-powered water  
from the steep roofs

of so many abandoned houses  
shoots straight out into the air  
at a right angle from the house  
and in a perfect parallel to the street below  
arcs into the air, gently follows gravity  
and creates a full-motion water sculpture  
that rivals the best of Versailles

a hall of water spouts  
25 on each side  
gushing water into the air  
creating a tunnel of spouts  
5 blocks long  
coming from empty, abandoned  
homes and buildings

and a few daring black kids  
on small but so-quick bikes thread  
the waterspouts down the side streets  
and get lost in the fifty jets of water  
between the parked cars  
and the occasional traffic

and then, ever so gently,  
life simply vanishes from the outside  
and gives up to the new landscape of  
rushing water, sheets of rain, an occasional car  
and an engulfing black pancake that sits  
completely oblivious to its surroundings  
squarely on top of the Tidal Wave laundromat  
in Newburg, new york  
    across from the pentacostal church  
    next to the t-mobile store  
    and next to the miller street grocery  
    now completely empty of shoppers