

# STEPHEN AJAY

## Animal Sadness

I look out to the seventy-five cows, their designs evenly black and white, like fire dogs who shift, side-step, and tap dance with hats and canes east toward the start of the bay marsh. They jerk their green stained chins in little ripping motions—slowly back and forth over the stubble that spurts back toward the sunlight. Looking up, down and up again, I see the cows have rolled like dice into different positions, their concentration deep but simple with the flickering sadness of separation season after season never recognizing the source, the warm force that makes them moan, and now they do nothing except return to this reborn pasture light-headed with amnesia.

## The Poet's Specialty

*For Czesław Miłosz*

The simple, ghastly courage to reflect when  
Time becomes thick and small—  
no, this is not the dreaming  
of a young person watching  
pure snow begin to fall, begin  
to cover a dark city. This is  
a pure faith launched not  
from the heart like a boat  
of blood, but like the invisible  
breeze of angels forged  
with little hammers in  
the hot tissue of the brain,  
in the apple vapor.