I’ve never been one for intellectualizing. Too much talk, never enough action. Hiding behind the halls of theories writ to obligate, bedazzle, and torment, it is rather for us to tantalize with the promise, however false, of speedy access and explanatory compensation. A poem should not be but become. And those who so disgrace their pennants, however and whomever so deafened, shall tar in the fires of riotous inspiration and bare the mark of infancy on their all too collectivist breasts. Terrorism in the defense of free enterprise is no vice; violence in the pursuit of justice is no virgin. This is what distinguishes American and Canadian verse—a topic we can ill afford to gloss over at this crucial juncture in our binational course. I did not steal the pears. Indeed, the problem is not the bathwater but the baby. I want a poem as real as an Orange Julius. But let us put aside rhetoric and speak as from one
heart to another words that will soothe
and illuminate. It is no longer 1978, nor for
that matter 1982. The new fades like the shine
on your brown wingtip shoes: should you simply
buff or put down a coat of polish first? Maybe the shoes
themselves need to be replaced. The shoes themselves: this is the
inscrutable object of our project. Surely everything
that occurs in time is a document of that
time. Rev. Brown brings this point home when he
relates the discomfort of some of his congregation
that formulations of a half- or quarter-, much less
full-decade ago are no longer current to today’s
situation. The present is always insatiable because
it never exists. On the other hand, the past
is always outmoded and the future elides. Light
travels slowly for the inpatient humanoid.
Half the world thinks the night will never end
while another half sweats under the yoke of unrelenting
brightness. It’s time to take our hats off
and settle in. The kettle’s on the stovetop, the
centuries are stacked, like books, upon the shelf.
Bunt, then buzz.

[pages 21-22 of the Poetics Statements publication for the New Poetics Colloquium of 1985]