

## History

For James Lickwar

Saturday night's isness remains, stays  
concrete, but this and that  
become smaller, paler--  
the roofworkers' smell of tar  
spars with the nearby Zen Bakery,  
herbal-fresh girls flex biceps,  
deadheads beg, beg for smoke,  
and the Golden Gate is smothered  
by yellow clouds. I look:  
San Francisco is not my city,  
but almost every night,  
without light or car or map,  
I climb up to my cliffy home,  
static-filled flat of whiteness.

My problem gets worse in the morning:  
like a Chinaman playing the trumpet  
on an empty subway, I hear  
Sunday's Want Ads barking,  
as so many faraway fathers,  
at my laziness, and the Pacific wind  
startling me into alertness,  
as tangerined Ohio and youth  
gust around Half Moon Bay.  
Hungry and penniless  
I walk up, then down, Haight Street,

("Histopy," cont., no break)

that dingy heaven for insomniacs  
and needles, and I look around,  
lungs bursting, positive that I'm lost,  
and stop at Oak and Divisadero,  
near Panhandle Park,  
and see what I could never believe:  
The Church of St. John Coltrane.

In the hushed congregation  
saxophones become prayerbooks,  
and "Alabama" is today's text,  
Trane's sermon on youthful murder,  
and what I want to know  
is why is it suddenly 1963,  
and who is this skinny and scared child  
hunchbacked by the Southern Sunday sun,  
who is not black, who lacks courage,  
seven-years old and digging,  
with rage, through ash and soil,  
on his hands and knees,  
through the bombed church's debris,  
looking for bones of children,  
and who is this faithless man  
now holding a tiny black hand  
toward some God's immaculate face,  
being blinded by mystery and guilt,  
by a gold and many-holed instrument.