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Belongings

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BELONGINGS

Into the closet in their bedroom that day,
summer, into the hot box of breath.
What was I looking for? In the dark
among their belongings, my cheeks first
brushed a heraldry of ties. On a field
of business blue, black, slashes of egg yolk,
dun. This man will not show his nerve.
Neither the suit coats of exact saturation
and hue, each with the right arm coiled
like conduit, like intestine, each with its extra
pair of pants, radiant on the seat. The shirts
the Jew-boy, Jay Gatz, discarded. Hung
on their wooden shoulders, black wires from the neck.

On her side nothing
flimsy. Peignoirs of flannel,
skirts of worsted gabardine.
Nap and fuzz. Pieces
I'm still ignorant to name
function, form or texture. But
this is sick, fingering these women's things.

What I found there with the hems
and belts on my back, a letter
in a shoe box in his perfect hand:
"I've never really been the kind
that waves the flag, my dear . . ." The rest
is shrapnel and traction,
a return in two years, sleepless
on the first night of his discharge.
A night full of the noise of stars.
She's in her slip on the chenille
bedspread when he covers her . . .

I forget all
but the opening and the edge

of the letter that I remember still
takes my sweat into its fiber.
Blood in my members, in the rooms
of my chest, there,
the source of my forming.