

FORMAL

First PLACE

EMISSARY
(Memo to Octavio Paz)

Dissatisfied with what you knew of death,
That dogmatist without an honest name
Who, proud with patience, coveted your breath,
You disconcerted him and skewed his fame.
Imprinting him with verbal vertigo,
Your hot synaptic sparks, your veinous ink
Exposed in him some things you craved to know.
Your molten poems formed a brazen link
Between galactic trees and graven stone--
Your chosen space to stand and pose your questions
Eye to eyeless socket. If anyone
Can match his stare, it's you. Beset his bastions;
You still speak for every slack-jawed soul.
Your pen predestined you to fill the role.

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