

# B L O O D   A N D   L I G H T



K A R L   K I R C H W E Y

*Photopheresis involves the removal of blood from the body and separation of its component parts. Red blood cells are returned to the body; white blood cells are treated with a photosensitizing substance and then irradiated with light prior to their return to the body, where they will convey to other cells the memory of a programmed rather than a traumatic cell death. One use of photopheresis is in treating graft versus host disease, in which the body's immune system turns against itself.*

You can do it only with a great machine  
    fashioned of mental gray  
in Mississauga or Raritan,  
    something the color of syncope.

First you must separate  
    one from the other, mindful  
that apparent unlikenesses are not  
    the most profound differences of all.

The majority you may reintroduce  
    to the place where they usefully dwelled.

But now, by ineffable degrees,  
    leaving no consent to withhold,

you must mix with those that remain a quintessence  
    activated only by light  
as it was divided from darkness once,  
    until they yield to it

– or rather, their belief must succumb,  
    that they have been under siege  
by an oppressor with no name  
    serving only death's advantage,

and they transmit to others  
    this revision of strife  
into a kind of solace,  
    and so pass out of life

teaching the stubborn body  
    it need no more resist,  
inculcating in memory  
    an unexpected trust,

the reviled, contested thing  
    now carefully handed on,  
and imperceptibly, without arguing,  
    with only the sublime deception

of the light that enables and justifies,  
    as it daily walks the scarred earth  
in its contest against reflexes  
    too deep to be reasoned with.

*In memory of Tony Anderson (1981–2015)*