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,
it 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)