

## NEVER AGAIN THE SAME

Speaking of sunsets,  
last night's was shocking.  
I mean, sunsets aren't supposed to frighten you, are they?  
Well, this one was terrifying.  
Sure, it was beautiful, but far too beautiful.  
It wasn't natural.  
One climax followed another and then another  
until your knees went weak  
and you couldn't breathe.  
The colors were definitely not of this world,  
peaches dripping opium,  
pandemonium of tangerines,  
inferno of irises,  
Plutonian emeralds,  
all swirling and churning, swabbing,  
like it was playing with us,  
like we were nothing,  
as if our whole lives were a preparation for this,  
this for which nothing could have prepared us  
and for which we could not have been less prepared.  
The mockery of it all stung us bitterly.  
And when it was finally over  
we whimpered and cried and howled.  
And then the streetlights came on as always  
and we looked into one another's eyes—  
ancient caves with still pools  
and those little transparent fish  
who have never seen even one ray of light.  
And the calm that returned to us  
was not even our own.

*What an impossible task--with so much to choose from, how to select ONE Poem? The best way for me was to select quickly, and I pick "Never Again the Same," from Shroud of the Gnome, 1997. The reason for this selection has to do with how Jim keeps talking to me, and this time he anticipated how a natural event can be terrifying, and how the calm after the storm is not the calm before the storm, sometimes, it is not a return. Some storms change us, as this current one is likely to do. But also, I just so love and admire his description of the colors.*

*James Tate was one of the necessary poets of the twentieth century, and I think he is, also, of this century, maybe even more so because of how badly the century has started off.*

- Bin Ramke