ABEDNEGGO

Imagine the presence, the dark shape
Striding the length of the furnace,
Stark against the white wall of fire;
The proof, or perhaps messenger of miracle,
Nameless, unexpected, making three become
Four to the astonished vision of thousands.

Three men given names twice over,
The second binding to breaking
In a dry time courting a king' s dreams.
In secret, speaking your first names
That in nascence grew with you, and swelling so,
Dropped from your mother' s tongue to grace

Your new-born brow until such a heated time
-- the death decree of the livid king--
Should shine forth in hot flame once again
The name given you in the land of your god.
Proper judgment in the world sets names over
Naming; the scale weighted to one side,

A necessary path marked clearly. Fire will burn the
Insolvent, water will drown. Sums have their
Final answers: something does not come forth
From nothing, from nowhere. Nebudchadnezzar
Thought his echoing rule knew finality, but he could
Not of himself generate green from the axed tree.

And now the dark mute man walks
With you in diaphanous curtains of heat
While you, shimmering, sing Covenant and Mercy,
Each moment becoming more potent and shocking
Like yellow apples taken out of black coat pockets
When one would have expected nothing;

But what of that dark figure? It seems
That it has appeared before: indomitable column,
In entrances, galley-ways, bedrooms, and
Gazing silently in the night outside through the window;
A presence that never uttered words, alien, not of language,
Terrifying in an unfathomable colorless cloak--

Not the vivid cloak of a dream- interpreter,
But one that must ripple and sweep against the ankles
Of inflamed men who strangely sing to stars and rain,
Frost, fish, grasses, thunder, springs and soil, outpouring,
All blessing, names naming. Beauty saves no one unless
It is sung. Azariah, amidst the darkness and light,

Your mouth is holy! As such appellation issues forth
The life of the world and finds that all things have
Voices in this fire, at the inner core of a whole
People. s sentence and lot lies mercy, a covenant,
Borne by sound alight with wisdom of words, seraphim sentinel,
Proffering the burnished apple at the center of the garden.