

**How to Read
a Grid Poem**

On the opposing page, you will see the structure of a grid poem.

Each grid poem can be read in two different directions.

poem title

A1

B4

C7

D2

E5

F8

G3

H6

I9

One direction
reads horizontally,
beginning with
stanza (A).

Follow the intended
path by reading each
letter in sequence
(A - I).

Finish with stanza
(I).

direction one

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

The other direction reads *vertically*, beginning with stanza (1).

Follow the intended path by reading each number in sequence (1 - 9).

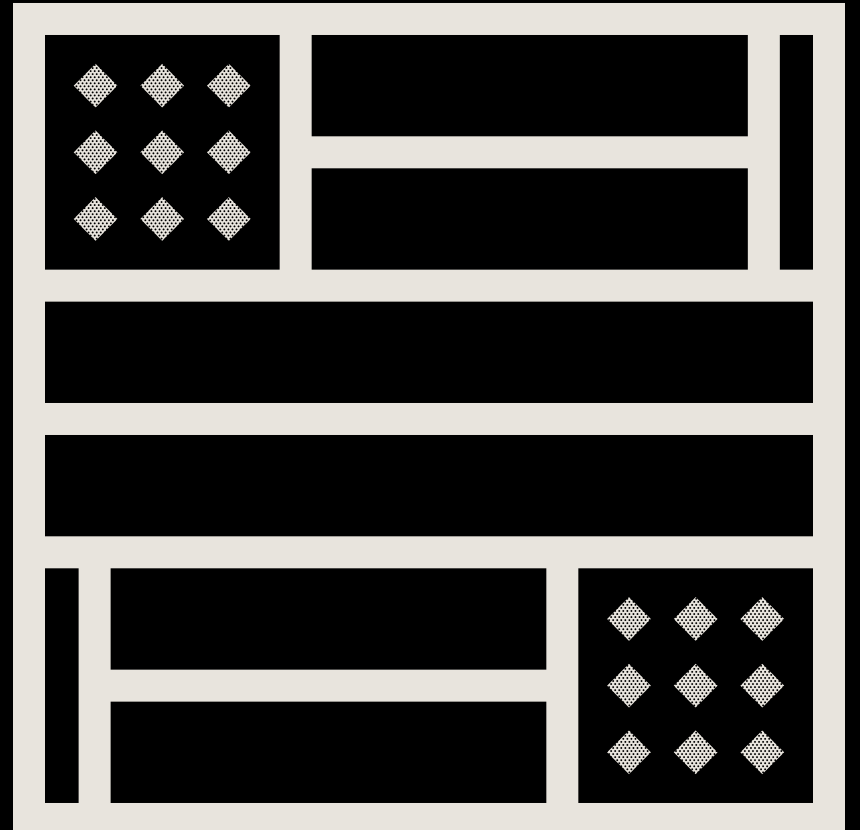
Finish with stanza (9).
Then, experiment.

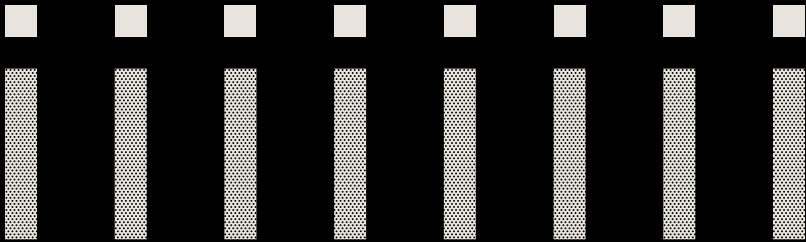
direction two

1	4	7
2	5	8
3	6	9

Part I

American Still Lives





this poem,
those trees

I wait for Polk St.
until I write

it's the sight of
those pruned trees

marching in
Civic Center Plaza

like soldiers

this poem,
those trees

each would
reach full size

without aesthetics

bound only by
self-symmetry

on the square
of a city block



opossum,
my possum

your dead
animal sound

worn back
by the road

black and
orchestral

growling

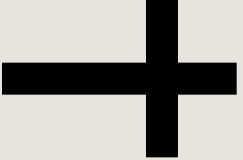
your toes curled
to rosebuds

opussum,
my possum

gray fur

wet flies

what terrible
songs we sing
to each other



neon
punishment

with a cross

disposition

on the origins
of taste

the dismal street
is lit

a noble gas

advertises

Thank God,
the orange

flickering

neon punishment



**the mark of a
functional flag**

flag poles wait
in places with
no wind

they stake
sunlight to grass

a promise
illustrated

like parts from a
complicated tent

while strips
of toilet paper
wiggle from the
air vents

in an office
complex

no one
understands

when the
AC turns on

because it
is so quiet



three days

day one:
disgust that a rat
had the urge to die

making a cold
place with a
bad smell

our home is
one home
inside another
home, a death

in a place we
do not expect

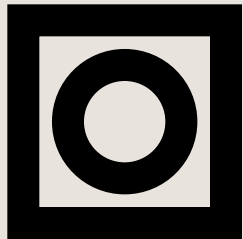
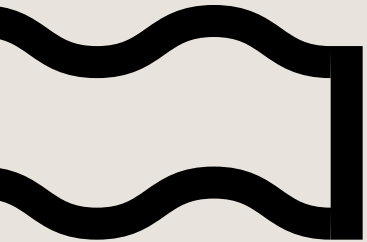
day two:
there is a waterfall

we haven't escaped,
people laugh &
scream at the
coldness

at a gas station
we buy a case of
Bud and fill a red
cooler with ice

we crush the
empties, swim in the
mountain spring, piss
in it too

day three:
two Buds bobbing
warm, Mt. Adams
smoked to evening



prophylaxis

I found a thin dry
manifold in the street

lest we worry
it loves

it hangs limp

tapered to a point like
a raincoat for snakes

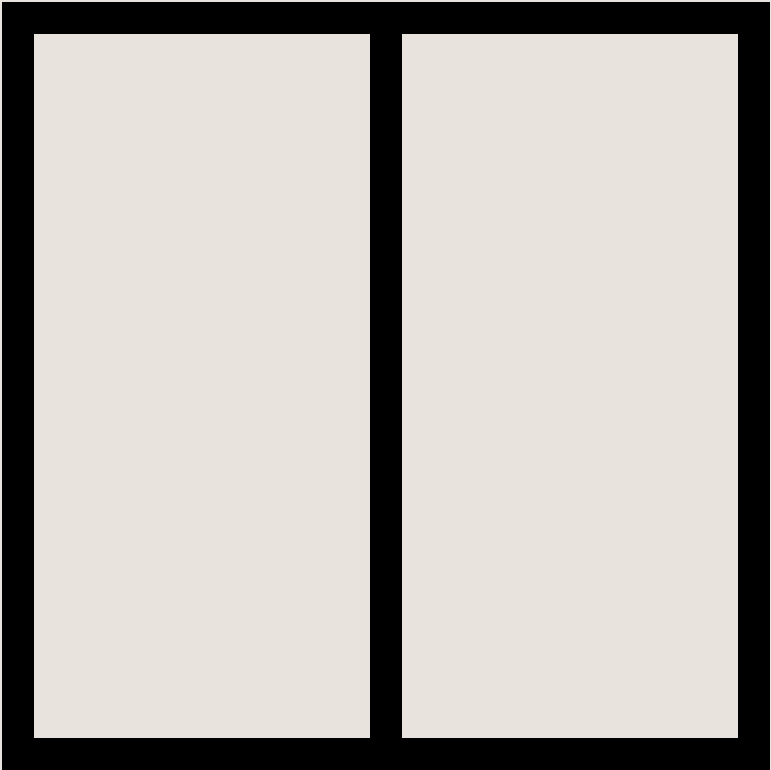
it plastic bags against
a chainlink fence

nothing that shape
is harmless

no heart fits inside,
Thank God

it flaps suddenly
in a breeze

nothing that
shape can love



**saccades,
barricades**

when the train
pushes past
barbed wire

it is often difficult
to imagine

boundaries
like the margin

my eyes cut

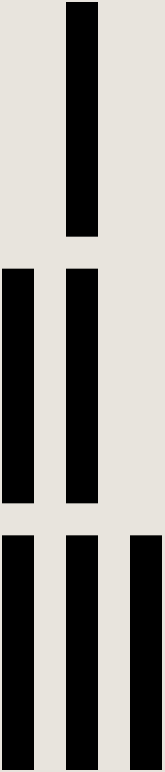
saccading jaggedly
to catch the pricks
of light

between two
plots of land

to what is defended
from whom

boundaries
impermeable
to thought

revealed as
my neighbor
mows his lawn



**boots by
Horatio Alger**

tall
buildings
look
on

long
lines
of people
who
also
look

but
replace
their
hopes
with
less

money

expect

barely blood

coiled
like
paper
veins

some
penthouse
beam
of
mercy

shining
down
the
old
pulp
fiction



no revolution

is spun from the
abstract sound of
'what'

stuck in the
off-board motor
of an era

crisis is the
sound of

what-whating around

with two
horsespower hope

cutting out

here is a rope

splashed
to stillness

in the lake of
something good