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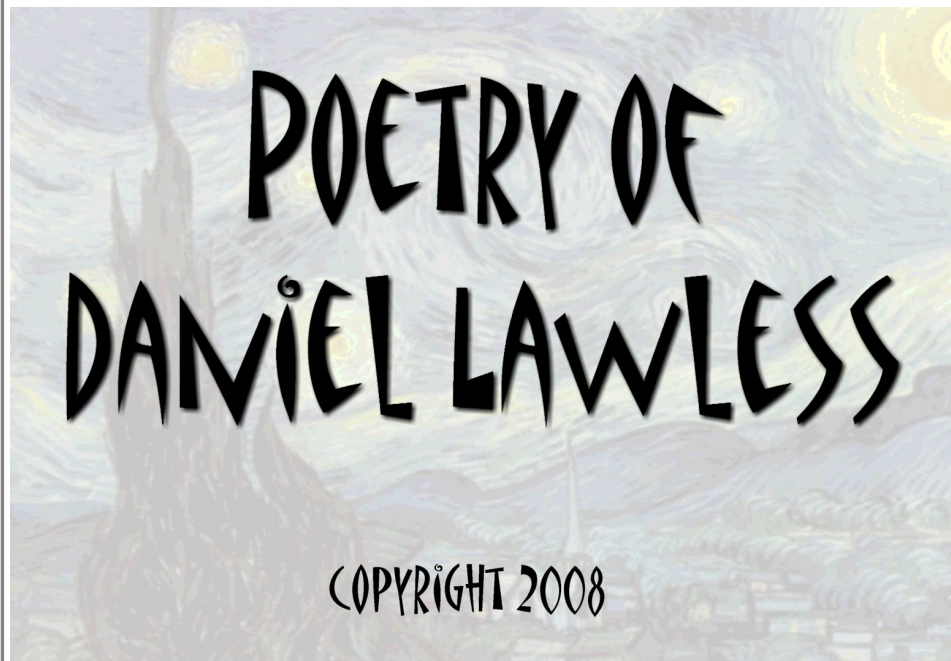
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### **Wig Shop Choir**

You, for whom the bluebirds of happiness  
Dress up as prison guards, turning and

Raising your arms – just now – in triumph,  
Grasping a chicken leg gnawed to the bone.

Maestro  
Of the wig shop choir!

I could almost hear it, the last glorious F  
Still hovering in the chilly night air

As I stepped into the crosswalk,  
The mad king applauding

With his two red hands.

### **The Shoes of the Old Ones**

Their makers vanished,  
Along with the horses and clouds  
That admired themselves in the cobbler's window.

The uppers of heavy tooled leather,  
Like an old-fashioned valise or portfolio  
Into which important papers are slipped,

Bruised with the seal of a bank, or even an empire.  
Thick-soled, cut broad across the instep,  
Bearing, if somehow held close, the expected scents

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Of their human owners: sweetish and fearsome.  
I see them lined up beneath the pews at church,  
Like sentences in an archaic tongue,

Punctuated by the tips of canes.

## Squat

To chase the first night jitters I drank apple wine  
And stacked my fingers one on the other  
Like lobster claws and waved  
Them over my head menacingly.  
I stomped my feet  
And made the rat turds dance.

An icy draft circled the room  
Like a terrified bird.  
The cupboards were bare, of course,  
And so were the walls,  
Except for the dime store Jesus  
On the Cross somebody gave a hotfoot to.

Long minutes passed.

In a dark windowpane I watched myself  
Turning pages struck golden by candlelight.  
I could have been the Duc de Barry  
Admiring a well-turned field, a forest  
Of turrets under an azure sky,  
But I wasn't. Instead there was a photograph  
Of a schoolboy holding a machine gun while  
Puffing on a fat cigar,

And later on one of a woman leaning forward  
On a three-legged chair  
Holding beside her cheek like a puppet  
A picture of her long-faced husband,  
Their two mouths  
Half open to a street filled with burning garbage,  
As if they'd both lurched up  
Out of the same nightmare.

The Lord Almighty himself  
Looking a little nervous too, I noticed,  
Peering fretfully over his shoulder  
In the wavering light,  
This way and then that,  
As if missing the company  
Of the Good Thief,  
And, then, even the Bad.

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