

THE RED SHIFT

One's son's an infidel,  
a posturing picaninny,  
a garrulous red,  
a why-don't-you-give'em-any-  
credit where it's due? He's priced  
himself downmarket.  
The litmus of fraternity  
shrivels up.  
The Vesuvius of paternity  
will erupt.  
Like dogs they'll bark it  
till the cows come home.

Curse those darling buds of maybe  
in several glowering terms.  
Your turn came in the army or navy  
no time for thought only action;  
when young Jimmy Dean  
was just a sty  
in his father's eye.  
Your shift was lost through refraction  
in bomb smoke,  
and the red was blood real,  
as was your fathers'  
to the power of one hundred.

But red shift's such a little line  
in the spectrum.  
And shifts can be slipped off,  
or started at a different time  
once his factory changes.  
Brand into violet and stick,  
green or ochre and sink,  
slip quietly into grey  
and fade away.  
It's only a little line like  
maybe  
and maybe never lasts  
save for iconoclasts.