

## Louis Lento

### *Wakeup Call: September 11, 2001*

The cacophonous ring  
of the motel-room phone  
woke me into the eerie dream  
of a bad tv movie —  
it was Tuesday morning.

In the half-sleep grogginess  
of my 7am wakeup call, the curtains  
in the room looked opaque  
except for the light gray tight creeping  
through the window edges.

I turned on the tube for background noise  
while I dressed for a meeting  
and the movie grew stranger as

I searched my suitcase for a tie:

news coverage	smoke
Manhattan	debris
interviews	statistics

The gaping wounds  
of the twin towers  
lay open to the tv world.

I pressed my pants  
with the motel-room iron  
and couldn't find matching socks.

The Pentagon was bleeding black smoke  
on one channel, a Pennsylvania field  
was littered with twisted metal on another.  
In the Big Apple, leaping bodies  
floated down a hundred stories  
like discarded tulips from a flower bowl:

replay	slow motion
every channel	newscasters
emergency crews	disbelief

I grabbed my computer bag and bagel,  
checked out, and waited for a shuttle  
in the lobby of this beautiful, terrible,

and dangerous life, wondering  
if we would ever sleep soundly again;  
and decided we would,  
we must,  
we have.

*Twenty Four Hour Lifetime in L.A.*

When morning percolates the waking day  
and buses echo through the city's walls,  
the citizens start all over again  
as if to press the Rewind of their lives.  
The army vet wakes up on public lawns  
in a makeshift sleeping bag like yesterday,  
and the chef in his fiery kitchen on restaurant row  
is shackled to a menu set in stone.

Then when the day turns into afternoon  
and the afternoon starts melting into night,  
apartment couples moan their same old sex,  
varying the rhythm once a month.  
And those next door continue with their fights,  
waking up the newborns of the world,  
while the elderly proceed to wake themselves,  
nocturnal urination breaks their sleep.

The lifetime that we're granted everyday  
Is lived, like déjà vu, with little change,  
And when the city's tape has reached its end,  
It's left there flapping on the spinning reel.