the center of our universe is a body count.
religion is certain about death
even if it lets us dress things up
about what it means.
dying rituals drag living ones
with them
when they die.
some believe in a transcendent lyricism
ebbing and flowing harmonies
floating through water flowers
or are complete
in evangelical breaks of joy
without the meaning
of a meaningless death
some believe you can wade in
utter emptiness
and become what it is not
but there is more to death than that.
even if there is no moral control
of transition and finality
there is secret agreement.
without moral control
there is no center
and no universe around it.

we are small village tyrants
guarding storage vessels
of seasonal grain.
we are the ritual counters
and shadow counters
wearing painted
accusatorial festival masks
trying to live the miracle
of being uncounted
lasting in what lies.

the center of our universe.
wf.h.
2026