I Can’t Forget You.

spray-painted high on the overpass,
each letter a good foot long,
and I try to picture the writer
hanging from a rope
between midnight and dawn
the weight of his love swaying,
making a trembling
N and G, his mind at work
with the apostrophe—
the grammar of loss—
and his resistance to hyperbole,
no exclamation point
but a period at the end
that shows a heart not given
to exaggeration,
a heart that’s direct with a no-
fooling around approach,
and I wonder if he tested the rope
before tying it to the only tree I can see
that would bear his weight,
or if he didn’t care about the free-
fall of thirty or more feet
as he locked his wrist to form such
straight T’s,
and still managed, dangling, to flex
for the C and G,
knowing as he did, I’m sure,
the lover would ride this way each day
until she found a way around,
a winding back road with trees
and roadside
tiger lilies, maybe a stream, a
white house, white fence,
and a dog in the yard
miles
from this black-letter, open-book
in-your-face missing
that the rain or Turnpike road
crew
will soon wash off.
—Len Roberts

PRESENTING THE POEM:

I Can’t Forget You.

BY LEN ROBERTS

SETTING THE STAGE: Today’s poem tells a story
of graffiti. The official, primary sense that’s
tapped here is the visual. But if there is such a
thing as a sixth sense, I think it’s what the heart
perceives. This poem taps that sense, too.

SOME FEATURES TO NOTICE:

How almost the whole poem is visual
The specific details of the visual images
How the poet describes not only what he
saw—the graffiti—but what the sight inspired
him to imagine in his mind’s eye
Hyperbole (hi-PUR-bo-lee) means exagger-
ated for effect

RESPONSE STANCE: Please go back into “I Can’t
Forget You” and mark the lines and phrases you
can see.

BENEDICTION: There’s a lot to be said for careful
visual imagery, combined with the poet’s imagi-
nation. Again, begin with the thing—the visual
perception; then bring to it your poet’s vision
and invention.

“I Can’t Forget You,” ©February 2003 by Len Roberts and The Poetry
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