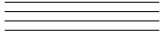


A P A N I C O F B A T S



D A V I D B O T T O M S

Near evening I carry a folding chair into the plush shade
of the secret place
and sit facing the house

and the bat-box hanging from the guest-room gable.

A quiet breeze in the leaf-shelter
as they rise from the box and flit like ashes out of a bonfire,
black, black, black, rising

and flitting like ashes. My gaze flies
with them across the fence
and over the side yard, the way I followed, years ago, the ashes
of a burning house, little black wings drifting
over the wavy panic
of children crowding an upstairs window,
drifting across the hillside, rising and rising, falling
and falling and falling
onto the backs of grazing horses,
into the tall grass of my grandfather's pasture.