

AMAUD JAMAUL JOHNSON

L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates Dead at 83

—*We were the finest.*

So the parents blamed the children,
and the children marched barefoot
through the alleys, spray-painting
their age. And the preacher introduced
the word lascivious and accused
the congregation of not tiding
when the daughter died.
And the deacon board smoked.
And the economists saluted Reagan.
And the police called it an economy of dust.
Our meteorologist predicted
a low-pressure system in the abdomen.
And the junkies swore perfume rung the air.
The grocer had his union; the butcher couldn't

outrun his quarter of spoiled blood.

And the girls wore extra rings

and caked their skin with Vaseline.

And the men slept the afternoon,

growing childishly morose as they dreamed.

And I think I thought we'd burn then,

when the refinery blew, and rust began

to bleed through the whitewashed fence,

when the lawns were done, and the schoolyard

darkened, and the side streets began to split.