



Image from Steven Hill

Ralph James Savarese

151 CHURCH STREET

In memory of Mark Hill

We were old men in college, eating nostalgia like candy corns,
the bag of youth emptied again and again of its October.
The couch we sat on with our friends in that off-campus hell-hole
was so ratty that even the rats wouldn't have it, and the pizza

boxes on the floor looked, if you squinted, like a game of Twister.
Touch this one with your tongue and imagine the perfect pie...
The present had no time to be itself: we consumed it as story
before we experienced it. Oh, the shit we gave each other!

Sometimes, after a night of partying, we'd drop it conspicuously
on the toilet seat. ("We" means you, Mark, and you, Gus.)
Picture a jump-shot failing to find the net. A source of amusement
my being a poet. "Thank God you can kick people's asses in tennis

because otherwise we'd have to question your masculinity."
(You had trouble hiding just how sweet you were.) The grief you gave
now comes in spades, in shovels. If memory was the sport
we played back then, why the shattering at your death? We should

be experts at living in the past... Whenever I read on campus,
I'd spot you in the back, arriving late ("I didn't want to have to talk
to those artsy fucks") and leaving early, as you've left your life,
that flickering jack-o'-lantern, and now leave this meager poem.

Ralph James Savarese is the author of three books of prose and four books of poetry, most recently *Never Make Them Cry: Classrooms & Coffins* (Ice Cube Press, 2024). He teaches at Grinnell College and lives in Iowa City, Iowa.