

darlene anita scott
What Makes a Man

1781

*We are not compelled to charge these men
with murder*

54 on November 29th made to brine in the ocean
expanse between home and hostile

42 on the next day –

*for that would require us to consider their cargo
men; to identify as pain or fear the screams*

of the 26 dumped like live fish caught for sport
on December 1st;

or these 10 who, in defiance and solidarity, jumped
into their own watery graves

as reasonable and conscious of emotion.

*And to do that would mean that we would
have to reconsider our industry.*

No man shall be compelled to work

barefoot, hungry; to breed lest

he be a beast.

2006

The man is identified as Darnell on the official police report
handed to me when I'm dismissed from the scene, my left head light

indented for a new tale I will tell my children. I call

to report the accident and

am given a rental truck and a bill of \$500

to repair the damages of a man

who wanted to die on his way

from the mental hospital 20 blocks east

of our meeting on Broad Street under a green light

in the hum of a summer week night, just cool enough

to come out for ice cream and a city stroll

because he *could have been a deer or a tree branch*

and then, Ms. Scott,

who should pay?