

YOU WOULD HAVE PASSED THROUGH THAT DISTRICT

you would have passed through that district
that region of synods squat & solemn
foursquare under the grey skies' spires & romanesques
but having pierced the line of clouds
cresting then descending to unbroken valley green
on the roofs of houses the turbine vents whirling
you would have rent like an atom
from out of time as every substance truly is

what exactly was it
the position of being without content or influence
made you flee that place of refuge
or were there new afflictions that you added or annexed
did you shew your color in the deference to reason
did you propose an exact meaning
when so clearly there was none
when any one perspective succumbs to variation
every recollection has the notion of the real

pissing in the gutter on the corner by the bar
you would have meandered back inside
joined your ecclesia amid their many songs & jokes
you would have taken sign of a practical faith
which inclines to human error
as a maudlin story caught in your throat
like the pickled egg in a beerglass
mustard hot on a sandwich
that one could be forgiven the unbidden act of feeling
where a standard of decorum may well have been supposed

was it any there among them who stuttered as they spoke
not about the turning but the light
as it scattered then reformed
aligned with order in its total sense
too then the body that ventures in its drift
what cruel measure
has the mind in command of body
a planet revealing itself succinctly in a puddle
unaware of any motive beyond local experience
differentiated from the rest by an unknown set of rules

words the way you think of painting
coming & going like frames of a composite picture
gain a sense of time transmitted
by which everything that is is
appearing near or at its limit
the observer apprehends the infinitesimal value
an object suspended in a smear of probability
yoked irrevocably to its halo of potential

ad cuius bonum
when the hours molt or build
when the fact of it is muted
mixed in with the smell of food & people
diluted by a matter more immediate
pinned to your chest like a medal

what constitutes its proper distance
who grant access to her portion
ordinary like a citizen
& cast among the pale senescent strands

on & on it went like this—
the shadow daily swept across the dial
the streetsweeper crossing the iron bridge
the ward boss raiding the coffers of the rotary
as aldermen puff on their long clay pipes

plainly one sees one's reflection in the mirror
where the book is a mirror
the tilted surface approaches another entity
a place both familiar & immeasurably strange
each part carved from the whole
the kosher chickens hanging in the window
a few seeds fattening in warm tea
a ship & sloop under sail passing
& about to meet on a river
trains stacked up in their yards
the military tattoo on the lawn with its pipers . . .
not a reel but a slow retreat march
performed with perfect gravity & solemn in demeanor
thusly autumn's graceful cadence slows
& winter's rubato begets
a spring of rose & jay
as well the evaporites in lagoons
the pawn shops poolhalls payday loans
a succession of echoes lingering in alleyways
until the final days of summer snuff them out

that fundamental you were trying to remember
was hidden in the structure of what you had already known
the fog brewing in the crystal reveals the greater outcome
extraordinary melodramas & miraculous acts
at first appearing indistinctly
then they find their full expression
moon spilling in the dish

perhaps it is a lesson in discretionary pleasure
the subtle sort of tension that precipitates a cause
a claiming a clamoring of presence
through which is confirmed its opposite
the world as bare condition & the book

within its leaves a sense of goodness mercy
could it be that each of the hills has a name
that in roaming about prattling to oneself each is spoken in turn
that the wider vowels of the north will gather in the mouth
& come loose in unlit corners where you stop to turn the key

then it's on to the next meal the next job
the same elements but in different combinations—
postcards piled up in the mail slot
losing a suitcase a handkerchief a tooth
finding in passing the threshold stepping into the room
a chipped china teacup stained by cheap port
phonograph needle still clicking in its groove

somewhere close the dowser on his knees begins to dig
& the rivulet is ripened to a flood . . .
you imagine life uncoupled from its prior consequence
you begin again as if to love
the cheeks assume a color
there's a brilliance to your vision
a warmth between the legs
which is borne out in the dark
more welcome in that instant than a thought
come bearing its broad heat
& elsewhere in a common endeavor
endlessly sequent the hours rattle along
though quieter times endure
with their meanings & their portions
there by sport or wit or chance

we can find a certain stillness
intent inclined to purpose
a simple version of ourselves occurring
in the places we inhabit
surrendered as the reed does in water
without let or hindrance
the air floats entire the earth from underneath
the thing as cause or reason
or as matter or account
so gradually there is sometimes no knowing
no language to describe

still the fruits that fester in the hawk mort
& lousewort in the bar ditch by the foundry
craneflies & harvestmen the dark L in *fall*
all follow ably in its pace
splintered & subtracted from other interpretations
ambiguous impressions you permit the words to stand
impossible as it is to disclose even approximate
the sign rendered in the hand
& affixed to its outer principle
you can only ever really have the outline
skirting the contour inscribing the very picture

every form disguises wildness
like noise lades a cohering ear
the signal separate in the poorer bank of time
become private & remote
& from fair distance observed
the irredeemable necessity of having to exist
allowing memory flood the lens
it may one day be conceivable for you to reconstruct
some months & some years now scrubbed out of mind
a morning you would have watched come
then slept again after

cradled by the valley
& the beer from her river