

## 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