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Psychasthenia: the care of the self

(For Knut)

If you were to enter,
turn to the right or turn to the left,
the others already there would instruct:
how to walk in the dark.

We walked down, Bleecker Street station,
underground,
turn to the right or turn to the left,
his gait twice mine,
who walks, who follows?
I cannot read his stride.

He looked at me and said, before we got onto the train:
Bleecker Street, Hart Crane, "as quiet as you can make a man."

They say that day turns into night,
that it turns in an instant.
But a day does not turn,

I turn.

When language meets matter in a noun
(a line, a square, a cube, an I) is when selves are remade,
the world relearned.
A day is night, a night is day, lit up, returned.

There is the room: a forest inside
with nothing to live for, but "forest" itself, like a noun.

To think in a box,
to write on a page.

So no, maybe
not a forest—a park, a garden, a path?
It lives only as a word, but I do not know the word.

With this, with him, our end foretold—without words to name it,
without a sound.
Maybe here is where he stopped, where I kept walking.

What one cannot know is that the care of the self
begins with an injury older than the Self.
Space contained or all-around, only buttresses the question,
am I someone or am I a thing?
Am I... anything... to you?

As quiet as you can make a man:
Bilateral, coeval, constitutional.

You do not know, but I am nothing to you.

I am a picture in your surround, but I am nothing to you.

I do not know myself: I fall back, shapeless.

I have no proposal: I do not know myself.

What good is a self that does not know its own Good?

There is no Good, we've lost the ground.

"Friendship.

That's what I can offer,

I cannot offer any more than that,

right now."

"You don't mean right now, you mean not ever."

"You're right, I added that on at the end."

At the end of a thought, you add another thought,

to delay, defer

my feelings.

Feelings are best not deferred.

Feelings need not be spared.

"Feelings are important."

They say that darkness falls,

But darkness does not fall.

It does not.

I fall.

You need the pull of gravity
to walk a path,
within a square: falling leaves, budding groves—
the care of the self / the approach of the stranger / a mile in my
shoes.

"I'm a stranger here myself."

What hits the gaze of others—your own stare—that's what confirms
in the end: solitary strides, a unity of men.

I think I remember the glass box: brown, or black, as I think about it
again.

Was is darker than brown?

Does light turn black grey, or more black?

Does it filter or does it hide?

The dark is a camouflage,
a mottled abstraction.

At every point
it can become
a source of light,
a potential
in the dissolution of matter,
omnipresent / rift—air itself,
you yourself,
a formless violence.

Light is not kind, light is the eruption of law,
the other room called
day.

In architecture, the rectangle, the grid,
gives form function, light its reason—
reason itself—the alibi of clarity.

In the city where I used to live
the solitary body moving through space
is protected by the gaze of strangers—each
gaze a gleam of light.

But in the city where I now live...
well, it's almost as though light
saturates the self,
and lit from all angles,
it doesn't recognize itself
anymore.

"Take care of yourself"

Maybe he said, "You, too,"
I'm not sure.

(Held captive by the TV light of a pre-historic monster cartoon,
Emmet said, "I'm scared.")

"No reason to be scared, Emmet."

"Okay" he said.

"Mama," he asked, "are the dinosaurs happy?")

Light in a box: the dinosaurs are happy.

Light in a box: it is the other people who are strangers.

The stranger's face is familiar.

It falls into a grid of thought—silent, but

already a sign,

each face a grid.

No reason to be scared.

If you were to hap upon "him," another's world would expand:

"Passing stranger! You do not know how longingly I look upon you,

You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me as
of a dream,)

I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you"

But here, as quiet as you can make a man, I would return to you if I
could.