

Lament for Lost Silence

And why, in the end,
do we think at all?
Stories of forgotten times
recanted in memories
of decanted vintage,
the conversation of a friend
replayed in variations of intensity.
All these are forces summoned
to disrupt the placid surface
of experience when experiencing is extinguished.

We listen to the footfalls
of approaching and departing,
and steel ourselves for conflicts
which are starting in the mist-enfolded battlefields at dawn.
Which even in the knowing
we will know have gone
long before the sun.

These nights enfold more perilously than mist
concocting raptures at once unbearable
and frivolous.
Conundrums pile upon us
like caltrops on a strategic avenue.
We marvel at their interstices.
We play at pick-up-sticks with fragments of understanding
inching each sliver toward precarious equilibrium.
We dictate dialogs to insatiable audiences
who reduce them in repetition to mere memes.

When nothing old arouses from its sleep
to keep us sleeping
we dash headlong into the world
and clutch the first perceptions cast before our senses
savoring them like ship-wrecked sailors
touching lips at last to a mirage of golden grog.
We make old faces at ourselves in secret mirrors
laughing, grimacing, stretching, leering.
How can all these strangers
recapitulate familiar physiognomy?

Behind the reflecting glass
there are no thoughts.
In the silence of not thinking
there is no face.
There is no footstep in the hall.
There is no scrabbling ancient enemy
or tapping new arrival expecting conversation.
Nothing impedes our way
but there is no going.
Nothing shoves us forward or pulls us along behind
for there is no coming
and the going is already gone.

Actions commit themselves
no thanks to acting.
Speech emerges from the lips
no thanks to speaking.
Visions move into and out of sight
no thanks to restless eyes.
Even the pavement, free of caltrops
slides impeccably beneath the feet
no thanks to walking.

Only in old age
does the mental apparatus
impede itself sufficiently for silence.
Only when the wonder of the new
is old.
When all the wonders we behold
are one:
that of the beholding.

That one could know at all
where is thought in that?
Where is the thinking in the knowing?

What are thoughts but nattering accompaniment
to the purity of knowing?
to the searing glare of knowing?
to the long clear tone of knowing?

And when knowing
in itself accumulates to chords
of harmonies beyond conception
of what purpose is the babble?
What purpose an accompaniment of sand
in these great tides of stellar intervals?

If every thought in every lifetime
could be captured and redacted
polished by the master poet
until each syllable resounds
with graceful evocative perfection
charged with meaning
filled with unexpected insight—
no matter.
This vast elaborate tapestry of mind
is only thoughts.
Not knowing.