
THE WRITER'S CORNER

Michael W. Thomas

Smile

I'm tired of walking the city,
trying to go nice to nice
with shuttered faces.

I'll stay at home, warm and quiet,
sideways on to the round window
in the closed and twilight porch—

my smile can make what it will
by itself, out and about, a butterfly
over a quay, so to speak, a tickle in the rain.

It might get lucky
with the face of a side-street rambler—
two smiles threading

just for a moment
two freedoms way above the stones,
two snowflakes teasing the dark.

Good luck to my smile
and whatever of joy it may find
whatever of loathing it may have to dodge

like dust
flown clear of a slamming book
on an empty afternoon.

good luck to all things that move
though their effort may stir as much
as wind in a time after planets.

When colour depletes
and my porch's window
gives up on show and tell

I'll lift the letterflap
feel my smile
tumbling in under my hand

it will tell me
in its different keys of silence
how it has fared—

hunting through the fissures of the day
making like clown, Samaritan,
peace-patcher—

if it got between a hand and self-removal
sealed a union of the widowed
made someone laugh at a joke like itself,
complete as a ripple,
sudden as a lift of mist

How Now

I've the look of a man
who doesn't know
if he'll come out where he went in

I sing these days
under my breath
prefer the gaps between words
the moments after things happen

I see
but no memories mass about
thought shows
its usual lump beneath the covers

coming out of a station
say
I may wonder what kind of evening
the sun has struck for us
then drop into it
feel how footsteps trap destinations
how the colours of traffic
splash each other up
from lane to lane

here comes a man hands-free
spraying intimacy onto other breaths
there goes a many-frosted giggle

this woman's had enough of her child
yanks his arm
like a cut of bungee rope
that boy
stands pudgy and baffled
on the eve of his adult life
his face doesn't know
if it should laugh or cry

I could stand forever
in nowheres like this
snapping and deleting

I could die here
furl to a brief aggravation of air
leave my image to sink
like daylight through the waves
an echo
that never used a word

Harbours Hill Worcestershire

One day I shall return to Harbours Hill
and die. On its only street,
cambered, gritted the colour of headache,
against the fall of January stars
I shall let my eyes roll back
to see what my mind makes
of the last quaint shuffle of life...

having looked in the window
of the village's one shop,
how it gathers little marvels
of winter light on stuff it never sells...

having walked the greenish length
of the path beside the unattended church
to see the berries drowse in their blood
between the railing-spikes...

having stood in the church itself
in case the breathing dust
should work loose a word
from a long-immured prayer.

On the only street
at the mouth of the path
I shall set like a tumbler,
my bones brewing a forward roll
so when it comes I fold soundlessly,
ball up where the railings
meet scarps of moss.

Mulch to mulch,
preserved a while
as a randomness of sockets
till the grasses of spring fill my eyes,
lush over the whitened nooks
in which a passenger-spirit
might once have bided my time.