

A Sense of Leaving

Not a sense of leaving but a sense
of never having been
away in wakefulness,
the morning tense impressed
upon the present.

And in this less-
ening of images – the
hills and fields unetched
with sunlight, there is no
you and I – uneven
walks in daylight or in rain –
the train itself a certain
sign of your fictitiousness.

And as in a test
of time involving trains,
two clocks, one
dispassionate
observer, I
move
not to arrive but to determine
distances,

realities,

I am
watching from the tracks.
But we know the tracks
themselves to be in movement
to a larger music, a
'music of the spheres', you
might say, incorrectly, an
error compounded by

the train itself,
its oncoming.
And I am subsumed
in this fictional
departure
from a place in which I never
arrived, a chimera.
“Chimera”, yes,
a fire-breathing monster, a
thing hoped for but illusory.
I have no way
to say it.

Cold breath in sunlight,
the sky flat and low.
Pop songs
on the radio.
Not a sense of leaving
but a coming to,
a myth-making.
I am confused by this
creating, remembering.

(A town, a hill, a face, faces.
Coffee on the street, mulled wine.)

The train has stopped
and I am awake, almost.
Plastic wrappers on the tracks,
a high-speed locomotive,
waiting.
I am confused

by this journey from the rational
to the lyrical,

from the analytical

to you.

Not

a sense of leaving, but

a sense of not believing all

external indicia.

All findings to be assumed

false

until they greet you at the door.

Yes, the leaving is an act

of remembering, but

can we accept the converse

to be true?

Arun, I

dare you.

I seem to have slowed down instead

of speeding up,

already moving from the living

to the leaving,

and then to the reliving

and re-leaving.

Goodbye,

blue sky,

autumn leaves.

(Families on the riverside,

afternoon drinking.)

There is so much to

tell you, but

what if the observer too

were fictional?

Not a sense of arriving, then,
but a starting in surprise -
there is no other
way to say it.

I am waiting
for a sense of unfastening,
unbuckling, unburdening.

Not a sense of leaving, but
a long, slow breath
never released.

(Long walks by the cathedral,
hot
waffles on the street.)

Not a sense of expectation, but
a sense of nearing
a pre-ordained destination,
a relieving from sleep.

(Long walks at
midnight,
hand in hand on the street.)

I need you to believe
with a sense not of
believing, but
a leaving your current location behind
at the speed of light.

Any faster and the train
will go backwards.

As in a watch that relies on motion, put
it down for a while
and listen.

I am looking directly at you
with a sense of trees unleaving,

the morning tense

receding.

There is a sense of cleaving

to the moment, I

have so many

ways to say it.

(Day-trips in sunlight,

wooden signs in the fields.)

Not a sense of leaving, but

a test

of eyesight.

Focus hard enough, look

hard enough

at where you were, to

get a sense of leaving

wherever you were going to.

I need you to believe

it's true.

I can almost see you

look anxiously around.

The train is already half-

way across the continent,

and you and I have lost

track

of how many stops remain.

Not a sense of losing time,

but a stepping out-

side of it.

A sense of lying still,

then, a confirmation of

one's own existence.

(Hot chocolate in November,
beer glasses, thin stems.)

The train picks up again.
I am confused by this
coalescence of images,
not a sense of remembering, but
a momentary step
off the train.

Getting
right back on is all you
can do.

Think it through

to its logical conclusion.

(Green
hillside through a rainy window,
mid-morning tea.)

My stepping off has thrown
the train off course by an
infinitesimal distance.

(Black sweater, spectacles,
pearls.)

I need you to see it
as if with a sense of running
through the trees in twilight.
Each step takes you further
away,
the fading light a loosening
of your grip upon the present.
Not a sense of leaving, but

a turning around to face
the way you came, as
when the train docks in a final station,
a seaside town with no way out
but a change of engines,
a return.

Not a sense
of being in motion, then, but
one of tracing the contours
of the space occupied by your
receding self.

The experiment has been completed
and no conclusions may be drawn.
(The cathedral at dawn,

giant cranes above the station.)

It is a sense of leaving
a theatre after a show:
fully arriving is as
impossible as returning.

I need to believe that you,
too, are leaving
the present tense behind, that
it is a sense of grieving.

There is an infinite number
of smaller distances to cover
before I reach, each
an unbridgeable half
of what has already passed.

I need you to step

across.

We will not find each other, but
the effort may help us attain
the exact same
velocity as the train, close
your eyes and you will feel it.
It is a sense of leaving
a gallery where you
were alone and all was still.
I need you to embrace it.
I need you to walk be-
side the track and watch
the train approach,
resisting the instinctive
step backwards,
looking
past me
towards my point of starting out.
I have a sense
not of leaving but
of leaning forwards into the track
after the train has passed at an
incredible speed.
A sense of staying,
then, in this almost-
destination.
An elevation of perspective –
a bridge, a roof, a hill –
to make the present visible.
I am an animal
that compensates for its
incompetence
with a keener sense of sight.

And now the day is etched
bright
with momentary sun,
a warmth against the skin.
I need you to come in
before the train hesitates
to a halt.

I need you to bring
with you a sense of
slowing down
to manageable speeds.

I want to climb
down with you ahead
of me, with
a sense of leaving
nothing behind.

Promise me you'll turn
around to see.

Promise me I will
return
and you will wait for me.