

THE DARK AGES

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The Greek dark age is obscure,
Because we don't understand what we know.

The Mycenaean palaces are destroyed,
But not at the same time,

Therefore, no invasion.
Fire, earthquake, war – against whom?

They were not rebuilt.
Fortified places increase,

Villages disappear,
The southern Peloponnesus empties,

Laconia, deserted,
Messenia, almost.

Again, no sign of strangers
Or invaders.

Writing disappears for four hundred years.
The troubles begin early,

Inner difficulties,
A long breakdown, collapse

And reorganization –
Instead of decadence,

Redefinition,
Major changes are prepared.

Myceneans appear on the margins
Of their world,

Corfu, Epirus, Chios,
The Dodecanese, Cyprus.

We find their weapons and their jewelry,
Swords and amber beads.

There is no evidence
That they are the “Sea Peoples”

Who overthrew the kingdom of Cyprus,
Raided the Syrian coast

And whom Ramses III fought.
The vase painters are more inventive

After the destruction of the palaces.
The Greeks who survived made up stories,

Poems of war and its aftermath,
Return journeys, homecomings.

AND WHAT SHOULD I DO IN ILLYRIA?

Fading splendour –
On the Grand Canal I forgot

Who plays Olivia –
an unknown,

Increasingly anonymous
world

That does not quite cohere
And nearly didn't remember Viola,

mossy stairs
Going down into the water.

Abruptly, the play which I know as well
As I know...

anything –
Sir Toby, Feste –

Disappears in the penumbra –
Disorder "is not an absolute,

But has meaning only in context" –
Vanishes,

Lost in the margins,
off stage,

And in the water-shine,
The restless, many-folded surface.

New anger remembers the old – and love,
The same.
The door of the gate between the old walls

And the new disappeared long ago.
The iron hinges
Are still embedded in the weathered stone.

PENULTIMATE

The last leaves on the trees beside the Seine,
Châtelet,

Ile de la Cité,
scattered

at the branch ends,
almost

gold
in the slowly-moving twilight,

suddenly there –
total clarity,

definition
and verification

before the light turns.
The wave slides up the beach,

spreads,
thins,

reaches its utmost limit –
fluid quicksilver edge,

and
holds,

for an instant
that is like a moment of self-knowledge.

FIRST GREEN

First green,
The orchestra is tuning up,

Annunciation,
Premonition,

Prompter's whisper,
Gesture,

Marginal note,
An end to uncertainty.

Minute leaves gloss the raspberry's arc,
Touch

And go,
Spray when the wave breaks,

Benchmark,
Passing fancy – new truth.