

Thirteen Ways of Looking at Therapeutic Neutrality

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I

Sat within the ochre expanse of Atacama,
The lone cactus slowly grows
Under the blanket of an aloof sky.

II

The elastic band,
signs a covenant
with almost-all the strangers and shapes
it meets.

III

The engine splutters,
A diapason of rust.
You can't go far in neutral.

IV

Are we to watch
With our father's binoculars
As Jakobshavn
Topples into the ocean?

V

How do we address
the attachment style
Of cats
Who turn their burning eyes
From the invitation they seek?

VI

The western meditator
Travels East
To learn the Dharma.
There he hears nothing
but
The torsions of his master's
Bowels.

VII

As the windswirls

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With rage and unforgiveness
The supple reed
Bends headlong over the bellicose river
but refuses to break.

VIII

Standing over the supine man
Casting an inherited shadow
The surgeon inserts
The stent
void of memory and desire.

IX

The red in the twisting
Patterns of the analyst's rug
Bubble-hot
With the larva of unthought knowns

X

What are we to make of the mirror,
Brocaded in thumbsmudged gold,
Echoing the image of the onlooker,
Before the cloudbursts sing their acid dirge?

XI

Alone at the trattoria
The professor tamps
The crumbling focaccia
Down on the chipped porcelain plate
And wonders:
Does it really matter whether we mix –
in
The olive oil with the vinegar
Or
Vice versa?

XII

Will the winter-tired man,
Alone in his apartment writing Amazon reviews,
Be forever haunted
By the broken umbrella
He tossed on the piss-stained stairs
Of his subway stop?

XIII

Kant gave us the moral imperative
Levinas the cry of the Other
Stevens the estranging word.
Which path should we take
Without mocking the blackbird?