

John Latta

READERLY

I read "Grammatically realized meaning is a postponed reward . . ."
And think how rewarding a scoop or even larger helping of vanilla
Ice cream can be after the loud and long rain delays and
 postponements of a broadcast
Double-header, Sunday afternoon, a little lazy, the tiny rug of grass,
 all dew-

Besmirsch and ringlet, cut in a few idle minutes this morning, cut
By starting at one corner (call it *A*) of the rectangle and moving to
 the one adjacent (*B*)
And pivoting the roaring mower ninety degrees
To proceed to corners *C* and *D* with the practiced indifferent
 maneuvers of a man

Who knows the book he is reading begins on page one and proceeds
Step by pleasant step through a tangle of signifiers, each
Shorn by the blades of vision and usual procedure, the clippings
 collected in the grass-
Stained bag of ratiocination (a reassurance), though not *reasonably*
 sorted

Are they, but kept unkempt just as he keeps to a comfortable stride
Marking a pattern, a ziggurat in the yard, cornering
Well, making boxes within boxes in order to finish before the game
 starts
Because the game offers its own rewards, like a pitcher who discusses
 with the baseball

The baseball's incipient trajectory, where it should arrive
Being where it desires arriving,
Though in practice (that is, in the real game
Being played out there now on the rain-soaked diamond) it

(The baseball) will always miss by a few gaping inches, that gap
Being where the batter swings and misses with a sheer
undifferentiated

Discharge of energy (accompanied by a grunt) just north of
Intention, just south of where the ball *thwacks* the mitt

Of the hunkering untalkative catcher who knows nothing anymore of
desire now

Because that strikeout (a kind of erasure) ends the game
And he is easeful in loping to the dugout, to the showers, thinking
How terrific a scoop of ice cream is, or how a book

A woman—a red-haired fan in short shorts and halter top—had one
day

Read to him seemed then like everything in the world, just as she
did,

And later like only what (and not, he thinks, much it was) had been
“. . . attained

By arrival at the end of a horizontal, linearized sequence of words.”