

Autumnal · Thomas Swiss

What was it that  
    Struck me as curious  
        On the road, returning home?  
It was late afternoon,  
    Cold for September, so  
        I had the heater  
Turned on in the car: it gave off  
    That awful chemical odor  
        Machines make after long rest.  
The trees, I noticed,  
    Had not yet begun  
        To turn as the light had.  
Against the roughly-cut,  
    Overlapping buildings—  
        Creating a modest skyline—  
The light was angled and going out  
    Earlier than I last remembered.  
    I'd just had my hair cut  
At the airport. I was thinking  
    Of physical comfort:  
        A bath and shave,  
Sitting down to supper.  
    But the road became strange  
        As I passed by water—  
"Grey's Lake" the sign said,  
    It seemed suitably named.  
        Cars in the distance  
Crossed the bridge in a line—  
    Over the Iowa River, rising,  
        All of us coming home.  
Home, then, in my comfortable study,  
    I tried to get that  
        Feeling down. I urged it on,  
But could only write: *Today*  
    *The light pointed*  
        *Towards something important.*  
Or was it the water?  
    I verged on understanding  
        And was held.