

ON A BEACH IN SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT

Gradually the monotony of his rhythms
overwhelmed him, like the repetition of small waves
on a beach in southern Connecticut.
This had been good, a good; but moderation
in excess, even the moderate luxury
of a rocky coast, became, finally,
one lesson in the same, old discipline:
excess leading to wisdom, and what good is wisdom?

The circles superimposed themselves, the sun
superimposed itself, on the same spot,
in the same sky, the same, in all practicality,
over the same beach. It was monotonous here
and good; the tempo of the sun was a familiar
tempo, but not a song to dance to.

Any change was needed. Almost any change.
Pacification of the prairie land-wars,
forgetting the skirmishes of cattlemen
and sheepmen, and the insomniac coyote,
had been effected on a furlough by the sea,
a truce. War and a truce were the first lessons:
not variations on a theme, but
alternation of all the possible routines.

If only the sun would bloom again with blood
he might intone a song with consonance.
Or if it shrivelled into haggling
inconsequence—as on a muggy day
a gullish cacophony composes
a rhapsody, for nerves teased into sympathy.

If only he could bring himself to sacrifice
this peace to all that chintz. Of course, to be
truly satisfied would be to forget
one's disaffections, would be to forget
the cult of satisfactions is a cult
and to forget one had forgotten. To forget
to anticipate. To be caught up
in an expanding and contracting

—hunger. He had forgotten lunch
and now it must be nearly half-past four.
Gin and bitters: crackers, triscuit, sea biscuit:
gouda, port salut, cheddar: braunschweiger:
anchovies or smoked mussels: and then dinner.
The old critique of heaven: no hunger. No stomach ache.
No wisdom. Nothing.