TROUBLE IN THE SKULL

I

That night white wine slid watery and irritating to the bowel
and cocktail eyes on stick-figures darted furtively
the suave, the ribald, the romantic
the grease-to-the-bone glamour-pusses, held their glasses
aloft as though holy or solar
chattered under the obscene sheen of the chandeliers
that swayed gleaming above their heads
as they slowly began to draw in with the night
teetering, as they were, on the fuzzy edge of idiot drunkenness
spraying words like coins into a fountain and blowing their smoke away
dazzled by one who found monumental mirth in the music of their mouths
toyed with the locks of their hair
calmly hunted them like a fresh fellatrix poised above their ivory bones

as hours lurched away and fell helplessly into ditches and gardens
into the stale odour of years, they would crane their necks like flowers
thrill to the chase
arouse to the blanket assault which, once begun
held them by the wrists and rattled their bones in a rhythm matching their
heartbeats —
a tin drum inasmuch as a bloody rush through
perfect temples plastered with underbrush
a rushing systolic time arresting to sudden eerie slow
and then the deafening sounds of swallowing and breathing …
and then the macabre twitching of features
those utterly magnificent evenings that left a vulnerable body
driven over and cuffed in blood
and left for slim pickings and blank verse
II

in the ballroom, to awake, suddenly, in the swish of skirts
and the baritone bravado which accompanies the genius within
oh, at these moments, it was suffice to say
unspeakable that one should speak so fervently
even conceive of wit and wisdom in the melee of the event
unfolding, dare it be said, unfurling around a fettered,
condemned individual; despair-driven to talk underwater
to bubble speech to deaf ears, turned as they are,
to any infirm with books in the blood
and the light patter of madness in his secret head

in the gust of these gatherings, there can be found
a couple or even a pair for whom a word or two
or a bone to pick can be a precious kiss on fluttering wings
and for these estranged, attentive shadows
a stream may proceed that threatens to rush their rocks
and soak the thin of their brittle skin
drag them to their precious deaths like a wayward brother
in whom half a life was lived and half, lost

there is much to be silently said about turning
a coin from head to tail and the art of leaving a drunk
room with a sobering thought,
when a figure stiff with charm can stagger
to an unforgiving home and lay a head to rest in peace —
the barrels of life pointed at the eye, aching to bless
an unsteady face with leaden quiet, unaware
that there is nothing or something wrong.