

Sitting on a table
in the empty cafeteria
of a tedious library
listening to a friend
I will probably never see again
he tried to remind me
of something he thought wise
that I had said
when we were younger.

But I couldn't remember
which is an ill-omen -
forgetting your wise things
before you are twenty-five.

Apparently I said -
how conveniently forgotten -
university is a castle
that secures youth's dreams,
an apparatus of projecting
hopes life size
before that tender imaginative lust
discovers the limits and weakness of the life force.
It is a place we fear to leave
knowing the world is a lesser place
that trades in fancy for heavy tools.
But time relentless carries us to the gate
to grind and be ground

in the mills of our ambitions
forever looking back
on that gentle position
of pure imagination.

But I am older now
and those particular sentiments
of my dying adolescence -
the apprehensions of a sophisticated child -
gentle to a fault,
abhor me.

So my wisdom is not only forgotten
but also disowned.

It is germane, no doubt,
that my friend was finally leaving
after seven fruitless years
of searching in his castle,
having found nothing stronger
than the compulsion to grow old,
and having perceived nothing more
than the transparency of his dream,
confirming, thus, his total fear
of leaving.

In this silent basement
beneath the tedious library
on a sultry summer evening

he emptied his locker
of sedimentary trivia
and a defoliated umbrella.

I listened awhile to his reminiscences

then walked with him to the gate.

Sheltered by his umbrella

he went into the darkness.

With less compassion than a plum

I left him

choking on my words.

CMC may 70