

Charlie Smith

SPECULATION AS A REPLACEMENT FOR PERCEPTION

1.

...I approach great bridges
the island curves like the hull of a boat
it's still, very quiet here at the edge of the park
paralysis is part of life, a refusal
to bend, to place
yourself one more time at risk
this is what she said
speaking to me as if I was the person beside me
I came a long way, but so did she
we weren't in a wilderness, we were in Manhattan
I confused certain qualities with my mother
I know that
but there are Flemish masterpieces in which this
is the whole point, I rummage through
my resources for stimulation
its always the same, either wait
for stimulation
or go get it, she
doesn't wait
but I'm getting too old to run around
I didn't want this to get personal
read about us in the paper
our ecologues our primitive conquests
our unavoidable desolation etc
a mystery always there like an unnamed assistant
or a room in Miami to which
the tenant never returns

2.

various commodities, an unusual approach
including a persistent ringing in the ears, fourteen
men standing on a bridge, we get down on our knees
all too frequently, speculate, scry, tell tales
we propose mergers of companies that don't exist
throw ourselves at inappropriate developments
we are going to get from there to here

without delay, convince our superiors we can handle the job
yet there is a certain seductive elegance
in our movements, a retrenched and compelled
consequential orderliness
that seems to drip with conspicuous
reversed phrasings
like a demented poem translated into obscure dialect
and then screamed into a dying man's ear
does it just go on and on like this she wants to know
but who can tell, by now
we are in the tropical part of our minds
we have been placed beside someone
we never met
told to devise a means to support ourselves, love
carries tremendous responsibilities
and unusual fragrances, it's best
if we have an easygoing attitude and appreciation
for sex and other mechanical devices
where were you last night she said
but how could I admit I was on my way to a keyed up state
little monster she said
but not to me thank god
I wouldn't want the consequences alluded to
by representatives of the church, party boys
turned good
we were coming into town late, all the billboards
had the same ads, it was a Mexican standoff I suppose
a wretched version of our former lives
complete with ancestors stupid available
lovers come back by internet to haunt us
by now the men in our lives
the women too
have gone ahead, or dropped behind
lie in deep grass thinking it over
as we do sometimes
on vacation propose
a new way of working things out
but no one just crouches and takes the day in by hand
or visits his old mother as he should
we convince ourselves we know how the song goes.