

Meeting for a Drink

by Brian McCabe



Sitting quietly across from you, listening

I look into your face to try to get at the center of
your thoughts, that is, to pull up the root of your words—

backhanded, heard before— words you're using
again but now, I fear, have changed over time

over space—words that have grown some new
significance, I'm sure, after all your devoted loves

I'm left shakily exposed to the distinction between
what is said & what is meant, what is known

& what is guessed— your face, your words—& how
both will change over time over space

according to which I'm here to hear you out.



Because you say you left home to find
a safer life, by which you mean safer love

past family, past intimacy, past devotion
the inability of which you too-soon find

is locked in fleeting time and dreams escaping
I am not lost or ungrateful, but silent still

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because I was raised to treat love as air
the way air is a substance of this world

and in the things in it, with density and room
to change, to link together, to be joined over time

over space. But the profligate are blameless now
Those who conflate sex and love the way

dumber animals mistake heat for light
have moved freely back to some primal zone

where if I'm felt to be contradictory to the
surroundings it's because I wanted that and

could you possibly understand that? And
could you maybe untangle devotion from desire?

You tell me there's no light in shadows as if
the sole purpose of light is stimulating beauty

As if it's impossible to separate seeing from
wanting to be seen. As a child

I looked up at night like a flashlight beam
pointed to the sky and my vision revealed those

archipelagos of light traveling over time over space
as each star had a life of its own, fooling infinity

in a way that reminds me, now, of the little islands
I discover in you. Now with my face in my hands



I'm laughing because you told me, "Look down
your shirt and spell 'attic'." Looking down the table

between us reminds me I've yet to take a drink of my
beer and the foamy head has decreased to a thin

white film, which is, I guess, much like the day when
our years together will become a memory, dissipating

like the day when we'll have saturated each
other's lives as much as possible because words

once spoken and features once touched will, I know,
become insignificant, fleeting memories that

turn themselves over time, over space into bland
static, at which point we both will stand resolved.

