

THE USUAL SYMPTOMS

When the train has remained stationary
for more than a minute,
my eyes stray up from my book
and focus first on the raindrops
speckling the nearest window
and then on a beautiful girl
with long blonde hair,
standing on the other platform,
across the track from me.

All this occurs
with a satisfying, cinematic effect.

Recalling how, on Sunday night,
Gina had chided me for staring
open-mouthed at women
-- alleging I am always smitten
with this slack-jawed look
when eyeing up pretty girls --
I check myself & find my mouth
is indeed open.

I close it firmly, even grit my teeth
to keep it shut,
but I continue gazing
until the train moves off.
All the while I keep the blonde
under surveillance:
even when another train stops
between her & me
& I can only see half of her
through three sets of windows.

It's consoling to know
I have some control
over the symptoms,
even if it is abundantly clear
I shall always succumb
to the disease.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

today i saw your face
on another woman's head.
the resemblance
was uncanny.

but her chic suede coat
& model-girl headscarf
were not "you."

tricked into remembering you
i conclude that i would not
want you for a lover
again.
not now.
yet i could desire this twin
of yours opposite me
on the train.

she looks like the picture
i had of you
before i knew you were
nothing like
the way i thought you looked.

Stockholm,
2/13/74

-- Allan Burgis

London, England

WHEN HE TRIED TO KISS ME IT WAS LIKE SOMEONE PRESSING
THEIR FINGER INSIDE YOUR NOSE

not that it
didn't fit
or that any
skin was
made bloody

it didn't
knock any
teeth out

seemed as un
threatening
as a finger
in yr nose

and about
that romantic

GEORGIA O'KEEFE

he would photograph
me with a glass plate

you had to stay
still not
move 3 minutes

you'd itch here
and here and

here down

there you don't know
how many places
you could itch in