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