

MARY LEADER

To Gaze Is To Think

Wait long enough, and a pattern emerges: the same
Series of light and dark bands that Young saw.

Nothing but moving patterns of intensities: bright
Here, brighter there, dim elsewhere;

Imposed; the sunny mist, the luminous gloom
Of Pluto; even as when I fix my attention

On a white house or a gray bare hill or rather
On a long ridge that runs out of sight each way

How often I want the German *unübersetzbar*
(Untranslatable). The rays long-pale slanting-

Late, conveying loss, nostalgia, an end to
Things (untranslatable). I well know it.

And the face overspread with light, with swimming
Phantom light overspread but rimmed and circled

By a silver thread. The pretended sight-sensation
(Translatable) whether visible or invisible

(Untranslatable): how often I want its intensity;
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast;

And the sun thick whirling explosive; and
Van Gogh's starry night squeezed into fine tendrils

Of optical fiber, and then perceptual light
From monitor screen, this fair luminous mist,

This beautiful and beauty-making power, light,
And light's effluence, cloud at once and shower;

The use of thin washes applied with a brush
Or thick slabs of paint laid on with a spatula

Or multiple planes of transparent and opaque rock
Color: the velvety whites, the shining blacks,

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The ambivalent grays, the ghostly undulations;
Light's valleys and hills. A smile, as foreign to,

As detached from the gloom of countenance, as any
I have seen. A small spot of light travels

Slowly and sadly along the top, when all
Below has been dark with the storm. Stupor.

Brow-hanging, shoe-contemplative, strange.
No matter what great distance we measure for any

Voyage of light, to itself it covers no distance
At all. The 30,000 feet from Everest's peak

To sea level, the 3,000 trillion miles
From the red star Betelgeuse to Earth, the twelve inches

That light covers in a nanosecond; all are
One and the same to a traveler on laudanum

Or a photon, who sees the universe approach. At the speed
Of light, at that critical speed, all lengths

Contract to zero, and the traveler sees an infinitely
Thin cosmos. I drink fears like wormwood,

Smell cement of rain and cloth. And what is
Succession with inter-space in the undivided
Indivisible duration? The traveler and
The traveled differ only in their wavelengths,

Wavelengths the distance between consecutive crests.
What is a moment? This I will say: Some

Were brilliant beyond belief, as when the last
Log before dawn would spark into my mania.