

PARK WAY

I cherish this corner outside the Park Way
where I sit in the sun to sip too expensive beer
and breathe cigarette smoke drifting to me
from ages past. The southeast bank
of summer soaked bricks is mine
to be exact, near drain and nailed mail box buried
in Cascade Hops below the trestle
of viney old rose and neon sign. Within
this wall's other side Harding
hoists his hat while Truman
gives his speech but I am without

children and wife and faith and all.
Smokers gather between me
and searing sun near Helen's hydrant on shadow
dappled sidewalk to babble in murmurs
and laughter. Their glancing grins pretend not to know
my industry to destroy myself. I smile back
to show I'm grateful and tip my glass to sip my food. I breathe
their sacred maze of cigarette
which raises Grandfather and seats him here
in his living room chair on these
sunbaked bricks with me. Seeing
is not as believing as smell. I drag him until
his thin lips tighten and narrow eyes
burn on me.

He knows. I hesitate
to exhume his forgotten ethos:

Accomplish Perfection.

With wife loving other men, children distant,
life's calling shattered – Grandfather's
cherished compass is my heirloom lost.
I breathe his disdain all the way down.

Mingled with his ancient fragrance
barrel aged beer is costly after all
my work to cocoon myself
in sickness and grief: starving for pain
seclusion for death, under my year
of leaden Tacoma cloud, I linger now

on this cigarette smoke
Grandfather exhaled decades ago and I turn
towards sky's burn and smokers fuming at me
to lambaste myself in this seldom seen sun, this dis-
appointing grand
son. Death
where is your victory if I can breathe
the breath of the man I fear?

Here they could fare twice and I'd still
roll up my sleeves to burn myself
on this bank and hole of time.