

## AFTER THE MOVIES WITH O.

You emerged from the dark  
of the cinema, trenchcoat  
creased, face askew  
under a beret that shadowed  
eyes perpetually moving,  
the crowd about you listless  
under the lobby's thin light.

Someone introduced us and we began  
talking, or you did,  
fatherly hands blocking out  
shot after shot in the movie.  
You must have been past seventy.  
Your rings hypnotized---  
the marquee a haphazard  
pulse of neon pulling  
us into the night.

Sometimes we would have coffee.  
Without asking questions  
under the soft circle of light  
lowered over our table  
we spliced together  
out-takes of our lives.

Mornings I would meet you  
en route to the ocean  
where you watched the Olympics  
rise from the mist,  
black aquiline peaks  
breaching shyly as seals.  
I never joined you,  
though we often lingered  
at May Street and Memorial,  
the quiet path through the cemetery  
down to Ross Bay an invitation  
you walked out alone.

Where I went you would never know.  
Yesterday I ran into a kid  
who ripped tickets at the cinema.  
Like me he knew you  
only as O.

The last time he saw you  
he couldn't recall, tagged you  
as a wearer of loud ties---  
livid slashes of colour.

*Quel dommage*, you'd say and laugh,  
fading like a hologram into the darkness  
that I move through,  
in a different city  
after the movies, on my way home.

Tonight Orion is out, his shoulders  
perpetually squared.  
Through the years he is  
one companionable presence in the night  
sky I recognize; I always map  
the distant stars in his belt.

Who cared for you those last years  
I will never know,  
a prodigal afraid to return to an empty house,  
your seat in the theatre filled  
by someone else.  
Who ripped your last ticket,  
had coffee with you one more time?  
Vaguely I remember you told me  
that you once searched  
through the telephone book,  
never found my name.