

Turning Point

The way from deep feeling to greatness is through sacrifice.

—KASSNER

Looking had long been his glory.
Stars would drop to their knees,
Wrestled there by his gazing.
Or, if he knelt to look,
Even the gods grew weary
Breathing his powerful incense;
Smiled at him in their sleep.

Towers he would look at until—
Frightened—they shook;
Building them up again, quickly, in one!
Yet how often the landscape,
Laden heavy with day,
Rested at last in his peaceful awareness, evenings.

Animals, trustful, moved
Into his open gaze,
Grazing. The captive lions
Stared, as at inconceivable freedom.
Birds went flying through him—
Straight through his soul; and flowers
Looked again in his eyes, as
Large as in children.

And rumours that someone was *looking*
Moved all the less, the
Questionably visible,
Moved the women.

How long looking?
How long inwardly lacking—
Pleading from deep in his eyes?

While he sat waiting, away from home; a hotel's
Distracted, averted bedroom
Sullen around him, and in the evaded mirror
Again the hotel-room
And, later, from the miserable bed
Again:
Consultations held in air,
Incomprehensible consultations—
Over his feeling heart,
Over his heart which in spite of his pain-racked
Body still made itself felt—
Were taking place and deciding:
That it had no love.

(And denied him greater glory.)

For there's a limit, you see, to looking.
And the well-looked-at world
Wishes to flourish in love.

Work of the face is done,
Now do heart-work
On the images captured within you; for you
Overpowered them: but now you don't know them.
Look, inner Man, at your young inner Woman,
At the one you have won from
A thousand natures, at
The creature you've still only won, the
Never yet loved one.

(Translated from the German by W.D. Jackson)