**Section VII, from *In Memoriam***

Dark house, by which once more I stand

     Here in the long unlovely street,

     Doors, where my heart was used to beat

So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp’d no more—

     Behold me, for I cannot sleep,

     And like a guilty thing I creep

At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away

     The noise of life begins again,

     And ghastly thro’ the drizzling rain

On the bald street breaks the blank day.

 —Alfred Tennyson

**The Day Lady Died**

It is 12:20 in New York a Friday

three days after Bastille day, yes

it is 1959 and I go get a shoeshine

because I will get off the 4:19 in Easthampton

at 7:15 and then go straight to dinner

and I don’t know the people who will feed me

I walk up the muggy street beginning to sun

and have a hamburger and a malted and buy

an ugly NEW WORLD WRITING to see what the poets

in Ghana are doing these days

                                                        I go on to the bank

and Miss Stillwagon (first name Linda I once heard)

doesn’t even look up my balance for once in her life

and in the GOLDEN GRIFFIN I get a little Verlaine

for Patsy with drawings by Bonnard although I do

think of Hesiod, trans. Richmond Lattimore or

Brendan Behan’s new play or *Le Balcon* or *Les Nègres*

of Genet, but I don’t, I stick with Verlaine

after practically going to sleep with quandariness

and for Mike I just stroll into the PARK LANE

Liquor Store and ask for a bottle of Strega and

then I go back where I came from to 6th Avenue

and the tobacconist in the Ziegfeld Theatre and

casually ask for a carton of Gauloises and a carton

of Picayunes, and a NEW YORK POST with her face on it

and I am sweating a lot by now and thinking of

leaning on the john door in the 5 SPOT

while she whispered a song along the keyboard

to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing

 —Frank O’Hara

**Nasturtium**

Born in a sour waste lot

You laboured up to light,

Bunching what strength you’d got

And running out of sight

Through a knot-hole at last,

To come forth into sun

As if without a past,

Done with it, re-begun.

Now street-side of the fence

You take a few green turns,

Nimble in nonchalance

Before your first flower burns.

From poverty and prison

And undernourishment

A prodigal has risen,

Self-spending, never spent.

Irregular yellow shell

And drooping spur behind . . .

Not rare but beautiful

—Street-handsome—as you wind

And leap, hold after hold,

A golden runaway

Still running, strewing gold

From side to side all day.

 —Thom Gunn

**Mount Street Gardens**

I’m talking about Mount Street.

Jackhammers give it the staggers.

They’re tearing up dear Mount Street.

It’s got a torn-up face like Mick Jagger’s.

I mean, this is Mount Street!

Scott’s restaurant, the choicest oysters, brilliant fish;

Purdey, the great shotgun maker—the street is complete

Posh plush and (except for Marc Jacobs) so English.

Remember the old Mount Street,

The quiet that perfumed the air

Like a flowering tree and smelled sweet

As only money can smell, because after all this was Mayfair?

One used to stay at the Connaught

Till they closed it for a makeover.

One was distraught

To see the dark wood brightened and sleekness take over.

Designer grease

Will help guests slide right into the zone.

Prince Charles and his design police

Are tickled pink because it doesn’t threaten the throne.

I exaggerate for effect—

But isn’t it grand, the stink of the stank,

That no sooner had the redone hotel just about got itself perfect

Than the local council decided: new street, new sidewalk, relocate the taxi rank!

Turn away from your life—away from the noise!—

Leaving the Connaught and Carlos Place behind.

Hidden away behind those redbrick buildings across the street are serious joys:

Green grandeur on a small enough scale to soothe your mind,

And birdsong as liquid as life was before you were born.

Whenever I’m in London I stop by this delightful garden to hear

The breeze in the palatial trees blow its shepherd’s horn.

I sit on a bench in Mount Street Gardens and London is nowhere near.

 —Frederick Seidel

 **Poplar Street**

Oh. Sorry. Hello. Are you on your way to work, too?

I was just taken aback by how you also have a briefcase,

also small & brown. I was taken by how you seem, secretly,

to love everything. Are you my new coworker? Oh. I see. No.

Still, good to meet you. I’m trying out this thing where it’s good

to meet people. Maybe, beyond briefcases, we have some things

in common. I like jelly beans. I’m afraid of death. I’m afraid

of farting, even around people I love. Do you think your mother

loves you when you fart? Does your mother love you

all the time? Have you ever doubted?

I like that the street we’re on is named after a tree,

when there are none, poplar or otherwise. I wonder if a tree

has ever been named after a street, whether that worked out.

If I were a street, I hope I’d get a good name, not Main

or One-Way. One night I ran out of an apartment,

down North Pleasant Street — it was soft & neighborly

with pines & oaks, it felt too hopeful,

after what happened. After my mother’s love

became doubtful. After I told her I liked a boy & she wished

I had never been born. After she said she was afraid

of me, terrified I might infect my brothers

with my abnormality. Sometimes, parents & children

become the most common strangers. Eventually,

a street appears where they can meet again.

Or not. I’ve doubted my own love for my mother. I doubt.

Do I have to forgive in order to love? Or do I have to love

for forgiveness to even be possible? What do you think?

I’m trying out this thing where questions about love & forgiveness

are a form of work I’d rather not do alone. I’m trying to say,

Let’s put our briefcases on our heads, in the sudden rain,

& continue meeting as if we’ve just been given our names.

 —Chen Chen