

at the CENTER

THOM GUNN

1

What place is this

Cracked wood steps led me here.
The gravelled roof is fenced in where I stand.
But it is open, I am not confined
By weathered boards or barbed wire at the stair,
From which rust crumbles black-red on my hand.
If it is mine. It looks too dark and lined.

What sky

A pearly damp grey covers it
Almost infringing on the lighted sign
Above Hamm's Brewery, a huge blond glass
Filling as its component lights are lit.
You cannot keep them. Blinking line by line,
They brim beyond the scaffold they replace.

2

What is this steady pouring that

Oh, wonder.
The blue line bleeds and on the gold one draws.
Currents of image widen, braid, and blend
-- Pouring in cascade over me and under --
As one all-river. Fleet it does not pause,
The sinewy flux flows without start or end.

What place is this

And what is it that broods
Barely beyond its own creation's course,
And not abstracted from it, not the Word,
But overlapping like the wet low clouds
The rivering images -- their unstopped source,
Its roar unheard from being always heard.

What am

Though in the river, I abstract
Fence, word, and notion. On the stream at full
A flurry, where the mind rides separate!
But this brief cresting, sharpened and exact,
Is fluid too, is open to the pull
And on the underside twined deep with it.

3

Terror and beauty in a single board.
The rough grain in relief -- a tracery
FronDED and ferned, of woods inside the wood.
Splinter and scar -- I saw them too, they poured.
White paint and the overhanging sky:
The flow-lines faintly traced or understood.

Later, downstairs and at the kitchen table,
I look round at my friends. Toward light we move
Like foam. We started Choosing long ago
-- Clearly and capably as we were able --
Hostages from the pouring we are of.
The faces are as bright now as fresh snow.

LSD, Folsom Street

