

from *The Imperfect*

Jour de fête

These city streets
haunted by a spirit
of mildly disturbing yet helpless disguise
the way dreams haunt the sleeplessness
of travelers to the past

Leave a faintly visible trace
in blood that seeps from no body
a writing of indecipherable characters
engraved by identical twins
double engravings of the skyline at night

Something preys upon them
so that hardly a one remains, having been
replaced the way ruins are superseded
by the inevitable
the decrepit by relentless afterthoughts of life

There's a fragility in their syntax
that submits to correction and yet resists
long enough to perpetuate the illusion
of virile continuity giving birth to the con-
temporary in the confused urban mind

Incessant hammers, voices of children, pianistic
violence of the intellect, arguments
that surge and recede like shrieking metal saws
then a cool bridge of air sent by rain
through windows left open till morning

All of this gets adjusted in time, afterwards,
before the greater recital of the day begins
but that's all for now as if nothing else
could be expected of this brief passage
into nothing besides another serving of itself

What we have realized in our prolonged absence from
the street is our irrelevance to it while
we've been gone, like an echo of footsteps on the sidewalk
no longer there just seconds ago, hurrying off into
the darkness of the Villa Paul Verlaine