

A Louse is Not a Home

Peter Hammill

Sometimes it's very scary here; sometimes it's very sad;
sometimes I think I'll disappear; betimes I think I have.
There's a line snaking down my mirror :
splintered glass distorts my face,
and though the light is strong and strange
it can't illuminate the musty corners of this place.
There is a lofty, lonely, Lohengrenic castle in the clouds --
I draw my murky meanings there,
but seven years' dark luck is just around the corner
and in the shadows lurks the spectre of Despair.
A cracked mirror mid the drapes of the landing :
split image, labored understanding ----
I'm only trying to find a place to hide my home
I've lived in houses composed of glass
where every movement is charted,
but now the monitor screens are dark
and I can't tell if silent eyes are there.
My words are spiders upon the page,
they spin out faith, hope and reason ----
but are they meet and just, or only dust
 gathering about my chair?
Sometimes I get the feeling that there's
someone else there :
The faceless watcher makes me uneasy,
I can feel him through the floorboards,
 and His presence is creepy ----
He informs me that I shall be expelled
What is that but out of and into :
I don't know the nature of the door that I'd go through,
I don't know the nature of the nature
 that I am inside
I've lived in houses of brick and lead
where all emotion is sacred,
and if you want to devour the fruit
you must first sniff at the fragrance
and lay your body before the shrine
with poems and posies and papers ----
or, if you catch the ruse, you'll have to choose
to stay, a monk, or leave, a vagrant.
What is this place you call home?
Is it a sermon or a confession?
Is it the chalice that you use for protection?
Is it really only somewhere you can stay?
Is it a rule-book or a lecture?
Is it a beating at the hands of your Protector?
Does the idol have feet of clay?
Home is what you make it, so my friends
 all say,
but I rarely see their homes in these dark days.
Some of them are snails and carry houses
 on their backs;
others live in monuments which, one day,
 will be racks --
I keep my home in place with sellotape
 and tin-tacks,
but I still feel there's some other Force here :
He who cracks the mirrors and moves the walls

keeps staring through the eye-slits of the portraits
in my hall;
He ravages my library and taps the telephone --
I've never actually seen Him,
but I know He's in my home
and if he goes away,
I can't stay here either.
I believe -- er -- I think --
well, I don't know
I only live in one room at a time,
but all of the walls are ears, all the windows, eyes :
Everything else is foreign,
'Home' is my wordless chant :
mmmmaah!
Give it a chance!
I am surrounded by flesh and bone,
I am a temple of living,
I am a hermit, I am a drone,
and I am boning out a place to be.
With secret garlands about my head
uneearthly silence is broken :
the room is growing dark, and in the stark light
I can see a face I know ----
could this be the guy who never shows
the cracked mirror what he's feeling,
merely mumbles prayers to the ground where
he's kneeling :
"Home is home is home is home is home is me!"
All you people looking for your houses,
don't throw your weight around, you might
break your glasses
and if you do, you know you just can't see
and then how are you to find the dawning
of the day?
--- Day is just a word I use to keep the dark
at bay,
and people are imaginary, nothing else exists
except the room I'm sitting in,
and, of course, the all-pervading mist ---
sometimes I wonder if even that's real
Maybe I should de-louse this place;
Maybe I should de-place this louse;
Maybe I'll maybe my life away
in the confines of this silent house.
Sometimes it's very scary here; sometimes it's very sad;
sometimes I think I'll disappear; sometimes I think