The Purple Scarf

1.

They were
going to the ballet
a recent work
by a favored
choreographer,-
“it will be
an exciting evening”
they were told
“and be sure to come
well in advance
of the curtain
for a glass of wine
and something to eat”

He had seen Lorraine
first
at one of the
new bars on Third Street
She had
come in alone
and sat at a
   table by the door
glancing anxiously
expecting
her friend to arrive

After awhile
she just sat quietly
& watched the rain
   drizzle down the windows

He had not
   the courage
to approach her then
   a woman alone in a bar

He went on
reading his book
and
when he
   looked up
   she was gone
“Wasn’t it
   your own projection?”
   he thought to himself
   and then
   left the bar
walking
close to the store fronts
to avoid the rain

2.

the rain was
beating down heavily
on the clear plastic awning
she stood beneath
and almost in chorus
occasionally
stomp her boot heels
and cough
the waiter
came up to her
and asked
if she wanted
a table
that would be nice
she said
Inside
the music of the rain
was just background
a Sunday morning
only
a few other customers . . . .
There was the
occasional
clink of glasses
and clatter of plates . . .

she sat
at a table by the window
where the waiter
placed
a glass of ice water
on the white linen
table cloth
and took her order
The rain
was
driven at a slant
across
the front of the windows
and there was
a feeling of comfort
and of being safely enclosed

3.

Rusty performed on the bass
is all I knew
he had
large hands
that thumped
against the
thick adjoining strings
of the instrument he played
“She’s looking at you”
he said to me once
referring
to the woman
sitting
on the other side
of the fountain
She wore
a thin white blouse
and white trousers
and a purple scarf
that tied up the ends
of her long black hair

she was reading
“The Flowers of Evil”
and would
glance over
in our direction
before turning a page

“I got to go,” he said

“Are you opening tonight”
I asked him?

“That’s me,” he said
“Then you
then comes Taylor."

I knew nothing
of women
at the time
They were as
personal to me
as trees in the park.

now Rusty,
he was a ladies' man
and
to be a friend
let me know
what was going on

I felt that I was now
intimate with this woman
who was
twenty yards away
sitting alone
and reading Baudelaire

after awhile
she became
impatient with my shyness
and left abruptly

she shook her head
so that her purple scarf
became entangled
    with the breeze
and fell away

end