

Through a Glass Darkly

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In their projected restoration, contractors
pulled down aging plywood, discreetly
placed to hide remnants of the stained-glass
window shattered in the fifties by a bevy
of jets too low in passing, their sonic
droppings witnessed in the crystal face
of shops cracked the length of town.
The choice, now forty years more ecumenical,
was not to reproduce the common icons
of the faith—Joseph kneeling,
angel, trumpet.
The glassmaster has lifted, in their place,
his abstraction of the very world that holds
this Sunday hall: high desert landscape starkly done
in yellows, gold, umber; shades of sagebrush drab
and piñon green; a distant white.
Geology of mesa, canyon; flats left open
to an arch of variegated blue. Above,
a didactic sunburst to reassure the congregation
that Deity has graced their efforts among these arid
lands, that this day's paths are clearly marked and sure.

September mornings, early, sycamores outside
this window urge foilage higher than the compass-
measured orb itself; alternately open for oblique rays
to touch the panes, then close to hold a quiet space for leaf-
shadows to project through this transparent text, speaking
darker tongues and clearer truths;
shifting corners of life's surface left unilluminated,
tomorrow's promise faint and unfulfilled, desperation
as Sabbath search for mottled meanings of this House.
These walls, filled again with subtle hue, soft among
the absolutes of light and shade where the faithful labor
in wonder, undefined, between ocher stains of slow doubt
and carnelian thrust of pentecostal flames that dance,
glass-enhanced, across the heads of those that hope.