

PAYDAY EVENING

Of late I try to kill my payday evenings
In many an unrecommended spot
Curiosity accounting for a little
~~And~~ loneliness accounting for a lot

The girls who pull the handles force their laughter
~~And~~ the casual conversation's not the best
Indifference accounting for a little
Unhappiness accounting for the rest

And the gardens of the heyday in Versailles
And Pompadour's theatre in the stairs
Should be ~~re~~created in my magic eye
From a jukebox and a stack of canvas chairs

But somehow we ~~have~~ failed to come through
The styles are gone to seed - no more parades
There seems to be no talk of me and you
No breath of scandal in these sad arcades

Concerning us there are no fables
No ~~or~~ brilliant poems airily discarded
Just liquid circles on formica tables
A silence perhaps too closely guarded

And no-one in this place knows who I am
They fail to recognise the last flaneur
The cynosure of Kurfurstendamm
So how could they imagine what you were?
What's Hecuba to them, or them to her?

The lady's calling time and she is right
My time has come to find a better way
A surer way to navigate at night
The poetic age has had its day

An ageing youngster
Outside a hippie tries to sell his girl
Her Whose face has just begun to come apart
Look hard and you can see the edges curl
Speed ~~I~~ has got her beaten at the start
And what care these two for a broken heart?

~~So come, Romantics, join me in the dark
At home the key is underneath the mat
They are beating someone senseless in the park
But behind a peeling door, my basement flat
Has room enough to swing a stunted cat~~ *and then*

→ *let us*
In midnight voices softer than a dove's
We shall talk superbly of our lost loves

Clive James