The Writer as Teacher — III

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The Poet and The Teacher:

A Game of Substance and Shadow

Paddy Webb

All day there are two of us:
one upright and purposeful
walking the light, and this other
trailing and mocking: a shadow.
It's no use making a fuss —
he's incorrigible —
he's waiting to take over,
waiting for night to make us one;
however insubstantial I become
I may not succumb:
this is a conflict of wills.
Imagine yourself formless
as he is, cast any way,
blotting out colour, line, mass —
impersonator! but what an
illumination this is —
  motif, periphery —
how exquisite! such class!
  a sliver of ice, a fragment
of glass, sculpt in cement;
  how it is, he meant:

black and white complementary.

He splinters these railway lines,
  cracks sidewalks, melts and pours
through crevices: scavenger!
  sewer-dredger, silt-sifter,
how I envy him. I whine
  my falsetto lesson, or
correctly mark time — corrector!
  but shouldn't be, needn't be,
oh, if only we could see
  eye to eye —

at least similarly.

But he drags at my heels
  pulling back, or rushes before;
he's my muse others trample
  I cannot quite reach, though I try.
I'm a cog in a wheel
  in a wheel — a cog-wheel — what a chore
to extricate a sample
  of my core. Day now, night now,
forces me to kneel, scrape and bow:
  Poet. Teacher. Union? Wow

baby! one of us must go.