

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.