

**ISAIAH, IN NEW HAVEN FOR A LECTURE SERIES,
IS PUT UP IN THE HOME OF A LOCAL PROFESSOR**

It is not enough to put on coarse robes
and spatter one's head with ashes.
Nor enough to bend through afternoons
beneath wisteria in fashionable gardens
absorbing books and the reports of commissions.
Get-ups and getting it up, the same.

Back in the old days, when Yahweh thundered,
there was in Isaiah's eye
neither the gleam of the crackpot
nor erudite repose,
but the fire, the deep fire, of conviction.

He would feel it in the thrumming roots
that gripped the genuine soil
of real lands he trod long ago
on the road to Babylon.
He knew a difference then.
The wild earth gradually segmented,
fell into patterns, grew greener,
and he knew then what he'd traveled through
and where then he'd arrived.

He was so alone then:
He quaked, he wept, he went hungry,
but rarely doubted that these were for nothing.
For he was informed. In-formed.
Actions followed from thoughts
with wondrous directness!
Men pulled fish from water,
and ate them.
People clawed the earth,
then planted it.
The seeds fell randomly,
a few of them grew.

Now, in plastic sandals
and thumbing a Sunday supplement,
Isaiah takes a break from his lecture notes
and peruses sales of building materials.
The price of plywood disturbs him.
He feels terribly alone because an essential connection,
now lost, stacks plywood in his mind

and leaves an image of standing fir trees
undisturbed in another sector.

He scowls, trying to remember something about
the intransmittable: how conviction's fire
cools when displaced from the quivering trust
engendered by felt and seen flesh.

Beyond the garden, lawn sprinklers
slither water-whips across the yard.
Who lives here?
Some man, probably fallen,
who advised him over breakfast
to get in tighter with the media.