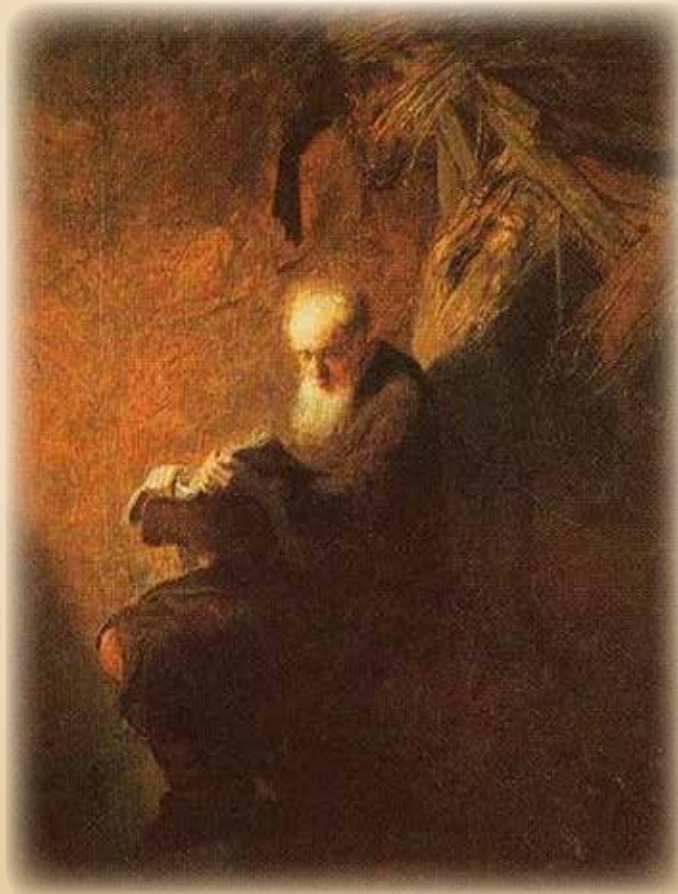


le philosophe en lisant



*Rembrandt - Philosopher Reading
'philosophe en lisant'*

I

*a print -
i stare within white borders
to enter cobwebs of a hidden room -
yellow-brown reflections whisper in
through a window somewhere out of sight -*

*gathering the musty scent into my hair
i see
an old man sitting -
dark brown robe
loose boots
a softbound book that needs two arms for full support -
bony hands collect the open page
in finger bent protection
almost white -
pale face in play of light and shade -
downcast eyes intent
on words i cannot see -*

*world within a world within a world -
he does not know i stare -
he does not see his room -
white balding head
white beard -
as if his life lived in the printed word
and clothing light and chair were but an afterthought
that grew around his world like a dream -*



*i knew him once in sleep
as grandfather who smiled distantly -
then as father
silent solemn guide -
between the years he grew to self-reflection
of a life i lived within my rooms -
not me - yet of me
carrying my mind
out of confusions to pursue a search
for answers that no questions could explain -*

*beyond me in his silences -
within my opening dreams -
the yellow warmth of solitude my own -
the hidden corners of his room recede
gathering the shadows of the floor
in secrets that surround him
in a prayer of challenges
i do not understand -
these i enter like a novice
to absorb and penetrate
the growing mystery.*

II

*halfway caught between realities
thought-images emerge within my head
as if the old man spoke and yet did not -
and i am bound again
within the tunnel of my sight -*

*white hair and face merge into halo light -
an old and holy man
sitting on a stool
back supported by a wooden beam -
he holds a bible carefully
pages worn and curled -*

*above
behind his head
a wooden shelf
thrown to loose straw and cloth
in bedding for a night he has not found -*

*an evening hour of solitude
a barren dim-lit room -
a brown robed monk
in meditation of the holy book -*





*a lion that is almost lamb
grows in a mirage from shelf to wall -
faint outline brown on brown
that spirals yellow into circulating walls
like a melody of distant hymns -*

*within
beyond
he reads -
no conflict arguing the worth of breath
or quality of cloth -*

*he sits apart
as if the room was circled
timeless in the knowledge
of the deathless life
that roots in every man.*



III

*tonight
the hermit studies
lonely and obscure -
nine lives of tarot walk within his brain -
incense of cinnamon
gathers from the floor
towards a hidden source of gold brown light -*

*sorcerer of truth
master of the night
he rides the shadows into golden dawn -
the book of prophecy lives in his hands
his eyes consume
elude the printed word -
mind diving deep between the lines
to penetrate the mystic root of power -*

*his whisper weaves as in a closing prayer -
out of - into
hypnotic silences -
...de profundus
a maximus ad minima
et ad extremum...*

IV

*as an image of my psyche
the old man reads -
a silent guide
who draws me to explore
the shadows of a secret room -*

*i see the moving walls in redgoldbrown
as energy as calm as camouflage -
his wisdom isolates
illuminates
until out of my blindness i perceive
the chair of my beliefs
the shelf that hides the dreams i dare not speak
the book that writes in centuries around my life
with words i know but do not understand -*

*the old man sits
reading through my mind
pivoting my energies
to penetrate the darkest corners
of the earthen floor -*

*and when i barricade myself
to cancel violent streets and screaming stores
he sits as company for loneliness
until the room grows deep
absorbed within
his white gold silences.*



V

*print of a painting
yellow brown
light and dark in flow -
the only flickering of white
catches between an open book of hands
and the sudden forehead of a sage -*

*the aging scholar sits
stooped in philosophies -
knowing his room
as the creation of his mind
that wraps him earth in dampness
like an obscure puzzle to be solved -*

*listening carefully
the ear can catch the bristles of his breathing
beard
when it rasps the woven brown that is his robe -
no other sound -
the stillness rises like a tide
that plans to suffocate -*

*ancient concepts rise in molecules
to know that nothing is without its opposite -
to balance light the darkness grows immense -*

*the outward eye swims through a golden sea
of wall escaping into scent of straw -
a small shelf warps towards a blackened floor
till sight is caught inside an easing shade
to find again
the old philosopher -*

*he studies brown in depth
reflecting gold -
an alchemist of thought
forever trapped
exploring the penumbra of eclipse.*

VI

*book of ages
onion skin
in gold edged conflict
with the cover -
faded cloth bent dull
darkened into years of fingerprints -*

*out of the silence
out of black calligraphy
symbols pierce the pupils
of an old man's eyes -
heavy lids
circled dark from lack of sleep
he reads -*

*a worn and lonely man
head bent
back slouched into shadows -
chair and floor absorbed in almost night -
fishnet cobwebs eat the dust
into wooden beams
the wooden shelf
the straw -
in a quiet symphony of red and gold
the dying sun withdraws -*





*when was he young?
white hair and white-grey beard -
his brown robe worn
split open at the knee
falling to loose shadows and loose shoes -*

*where did he grow -
this white haired ghost of childhood?
what ambitions carried him
a solitary search
trying to define the camouflage
of violent thoughts he locked within his skull?*

*a golden warm creeps easily into his skin -
he reads
somewhere at peace
as if the truth he sought
was captured in the words
he saw too many times to understand -*

*he stares through the reflections
of a life he never saw
and yet it seems
he searched too long to care.*

VII

*staring at the print -
the old man -
as through a window frame
i wonder
if his wall holds a print of me
sitting at my desk
frozen in an image two dimensional -*

*perhaps i grew somewhere within his head
projected in full history
until i lived -
or maybe both of us exist
as separate lives
as pictures on the wall -*

*when i am not here -
he finishes his reading -
stretches -
grabs an apple for a midnight snack -
pulls his bedding off the shelf
and goes to sleep -
and when i am spaced deep within a book
he stares at me
wondering my name
and my reality.*



VII

*as i watch it seems
the wandering jew lives quietly
silently
within the picture frame -*

*two thousand years of wandering
to be
the rebel born to some forgotten cause -
grown old and ageless
in solitary thought
that holds him exile to the common flow -*

*all names are his -
unbeliever
who knew where not to believe -
once called heretic
until he disappeared and someone else was found
to take his place -*

*then called eccentric
except the rich alone
hold the excuse for eccentricity -
owning nothing but his robe
and one worn book
the world called him crazy
and let him be -*





*now he lives in solitude
somewhere forgotten in a corner of the earth -
nothing owned leaves nothing to be lost -
mellow gold and brown
with sun for company -
a cave made room for shelter
a stump for stool -
a shelf for straw
loose stuffing for a mattress
somewhere invisible
and his needs are met -*

*for luxury
one book
in which his mind can travel
the dimensions of word metaphor -*

*nothing lost
nothing gained -
he waits some miracle of stars
to be recalled to wandering
as lonely prophet
echoing deaf ears.*

IX

*who is he?
this old man
that someone painted to create
a world once removed?*

*is he a god?
the fringe of hair that wraps around his head
like fuzzed remnants of white wool -
the grey white beard that rests upon his robe -
the puckered forehead
bony fingers
gather to project illusions of antiquity -*

*the hidden sun
defines a wrinkled wall
to collect an eerie trinity of light
in white to yellowbrown to black -
the black predominates -*

*what does he read?
the book rests heavily between his hands
as if the weight of words had curled page and cover
in omens of a shadowed destiny -*





*this is no book for sun -
it gathers darkness like a promise
unfulfilled -
a strange mythology recalling sui-
cides
between the heroes history denied -*

*above the old man's head
a shelf half empty
waiting between straw and shade
to hide the book from eyes
until the fragile pages crumble into
dust -*

*face worn beyond his years
the old man reads-
one step outside of time -
his knowledge threading secrets
that leave imagination blind.*

X

*riddle put to light and shade
like old man of the moon
grown between refractions
that disturb a nowhere sun -*

*his earth wall pivots memories
of ridge and pit relief
yellow-brown-red-black emerge
where colour never lived -*

*stray smoke gathers slowly
where no fire can be found
gathering as in a cloud
that has no word for rain -*

*there is no age without the child
no word for sleep where sleep is not
no voice within the echo
of a silence born in thought -*





*the old man reads an empty book
one finger drew in blood -
where no one traced the death of life
life is not understood -*

*straw that is not straw recalls
a shelf above his head
trapping wooden memories
of shape without a form -*

*he rides the shadows like a chair
no eyes have ever seen -
weaves a robe from darkness
that his knowledge never owned -*

*somehow a shoe that knows no toe
out of a time that time forgot -
somewhere a floor that never was -
he is where all is not.*

XI

*tonight the picture burns
red gold smouldering -
weary
omnipotent
the old man does not move -*

*tonight he is prometheus
that great father of the gods
who created
form out of the formless
making men -
he gave them fire
to hide their helplessness -*

*now he sits in haze of smoke and heat
the human world burns -
he does not turn -
out of his stillness
smoke eats into cloud
balance out of chaos
fire bound by flood -*

*the book of destiny is in his hands -
he marks the century
that writes him crucified
for creativity.*



XII

*just an old man
sitting
reading -*

*no family
no friends -
those he knew
have died or disappeared -*

*too tired
to begin again
he reads
to escape
the confines of mortality -*

*he is wise
but none ask for his wisdom -
he is old
but no one notices -*

*secluded
in his austere room
forgotten
by the world -*

*not happy
not unhappy
an old man reads.*

