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George Moore

Blackhole

*When Gensha was asked by a monk, "What is my self?"
he at once replied, "What would you do with a self?"*

-- D. T. Suzuki

Out of this world and into the next,
the echo travels the path of its own call,
the self, a displaced remnant and sad

memorial, the supplement of its own beginning,
rumors to be born again in the next universe.
How do I get there?

I hear from across the room a comment
on the spaces in time, or was it time
of spaces? The doctor says be sure,

if nothing else. Gensha's remark
was an aphorism, axiom or epigram, or an eye
in the center of the young monk's heart.

How do I get there?
The self, an illusion of mirrors in space.
Like *blackhole*, in the French, as word

the French did not want, associated
with a singularity that the self might travel
like a man on a horse, a picture of science

just beyond the edge of math.
As such, it exists irrevocably.
How do I get there?

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Wearing the old robe of a monk,
and the slippers of a saint,
should I wade the stream of stars,

holding my breath? The camel that passes
through the eye of the needle is death.
Yet, in the other universe is the simplest self.

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The Film Cut

—for Luchino Visconti di Modrone

...the morning, a fife
sounds, light through blinds
marks a floor's stippled images
with intermittent elements
of illumination. The film
ends where it began. Who
can tell if we are as happy

as before? His loves
arrayed like swans
on a frozen lake, their nests
in the ice. Months passing,
seasons warm, so he
could count them, up to
a point, like white stones.

Noir, retrieved sense of
the forgotten, down alleyways,
up against brick building walls,
his love for each of them
sacrificed, a moving
of tragic urban life let fall
to the cutting room floor

he believed he had led.
But behind, light was always
too sharp, night was
never quick, so black. His
invisible stamp, a world of two
dimensions, two shades,
swans granting him

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two sides of one face,
mask and man unmasked,
beneath which he could love
only a memory of each one,
lifted off lake ice,
left him standing, dark line
in an absence of white.

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Gertrude Stein: At the Last Salon

My sense of the room is that it is much smaller than I had guessed.
Our first encounter, almost like a strange marriage.

She sits with her dog, Basket,
or maybe Basket II,
the repetition intriguing, or was it her own idea of *insistence*,
that which never repeats because it possesses time?

An ugly poodle in an ugly room
surrounded by her megalomania for radical art,
for *subjects*.

My dissertation almost never complete,
I write on into the cold mornings at a five-page-a-day speed,
finish the thing they all finally say, this brute
hiatus from life.

As I enter the room, she smiles like the wealthy Buddha
his sack on a stick over his back,
no reflection in it, only the mouth turned up at the corners,
perhaps showing stoic disapproval.

The masklike image of her Picasso did,
carved out of paint months after he last visited her,
the spotless salon as brittle as its moment before the war, in history.

Everything she says she says twice, like I were a child before a mountain,
delicate disarray of her last salon before the invasion of Paris.

But she looks out of the window and sees the real street.
Is it her street, her city, Paris, her time?
Somehow we are there together left out of the war,

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and she says, slowly, as to a child, this is the way things are,
my friend... brilliant and fleeting. She says it
almost flippantly, exaggerating nothing of its ironic sense.

And I'm made to write her name a hundred times,
a hundred mornings in a row, and those hundred mornings blossom
into sweet corruption, a better, white hope,

a morning after, that comes in the middle of the night,
watching the candles dance across the surfaces
of those fractured faces high on the wall.