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S.P. HEALEY

AS WESTERN CULTURE DECLINES WITHOUT ITS KNOWING

His body is an accumulation of hindsights,
Dreams of fallout shelters, names engraved
In bullets, centuries of weathered newspapers,
Weeping flags, widows walking through flowers,
Retired heroes living on mild archipelagos,
Credits rising because the movie is over.

It's a small door open to the counterfeit light
Of dead stars, lost sources of celestial rivers,
Marathons time forgot, while another vernal equinox,
The sequel to last year's version, comes true,
Making day once again equal night. It's a hand
Searching for unfamiliar faces and the syllables
They once spoke, because now he's the only thing
He knows, and there's word this galaxy is drifting
In a different direction than previously believed.

This means an unknown is attracting it, though it
Remains intact, iceberg-like, promoting togetherness,
Each person frozen and individually-wrapped
Inside an enormous shape, moving simultaneously
Toward the same unknown. There's also word that
The Palos Verdes butterfly, believed to be extinct,
Has been "rediscovered" in southern California.
About a hundred of them were found "flitting around
A pocket of deerweed" next to an oil refinery.

This is visibility after a period of hiding,

To a lightswitch under finger
As your eyes adjust to fact.

You're both wave and particle,
Doorway and vanishing point,

Possessor of reasons without shapes,
Governments without nations,

And it'll be water that takes you away,
Having read the memoirs of dead generals,
Having known their sad victories.