

SEVEN

A change in the lighting

The fingers of the left hand, still affixed to the chair, have become slightly more cramped. Otherwise, same as before.

As I sat there, listening
 Silently to the silence, it occurred to me that this moment,
 This unanticipated
 Caesura, this simultaneous
 Interruption
 Of our four independent wanderings—well, it seemed
 Like something
 I ought to take advantage of—
 This, I told myself, was an opening
 Not
 To be ignored—I mean, these
 Were the ideal conditions for taking
 Another count.

Just a quick one: lift my head up and look around...
 One... two... three...
 And I, as always, would be
 Number Four—
 Observe each person in his or her place—serene,
 Stationary,
 Unique, and individual—each person
 Presenting, for the length of that transient moment, a single
 Image
 To the observing mind, a countable
 Aspect, solid
 And still.

Was the person who appeared a short time ago
 In profile, drifting slowly
 Past a pillar, the same person
 Who appears
 Now, on the balcony, in three-quarter's view
 And wearing
 Glasses?—and are either
 Or both of them the same person who,
 A few minutes from now,
 Will appear back down on the main floor, having donned

Or removed
An overcoat, say, or an anorak—a figure
Filled
With unknown purpose, walking down
The aisle that runs
Between the rows of benches, displaying
For my
Consideration
An unfamiliar and problematic
Backside?

If I hurried and gathered
Myself together
To take another count, such dilemmas would not
Beset me—if I
Counted now, right now, for once
I would not have to wrestle
With hundreds
Or even thousands of positions, postures
And changes
Of clothing—the excess, that daunting
Superfluity of images from which the exhausted
Mind, if it is ever
To have
Any peace at all, must struggle to extract
The correct
Number of constant
Identities.

And so, in that unlikely moment, in the fragile
Accident
Of stillness and the humming
Buzzing silence, I raised my head and began, once again,
To count.