

**Robert JC Young****Università**

A thousand miles away  
And once again I find myself  
In the comfort of the familiar  
The elegant quadrangle  
Laced with roman columns and rounded arches  
The light playing on the stone  
The domed ceilings absorbing the noise that we make  
As we pace from side to side,  
The only difference being the orange trees  
That flaunt their bright fruits beneath  
Draped by hanging chains.  
The diamond dome of the chapel high above us  
Displays its enduring triumph –  
Its institutions of knowledge  
Stubbornly persist through the centuries  
Long after it has been shuffled to the side-lines.  
Its spirit lives on holding us all  
In its gentle ghostly grip  
Making meaning for generations of lives.  
I love it and spend my life  
Loyally rebelling against it.

II

I walk out into the light air of the quadrangle  
Making my escape from intense discussions in the auditorium.  
Each length of weathered stones seems like its own journey

With a changing narrative of frescoes above  
Until I reach a far corner with a green plastic chair  
Beside an ugly metal door with dirty glass panes  
That look out flat onto the world outside.  
Once upon a time this opening would have had  
A thick door of gnarled wood preserving privacy  
From outside to in and inside to out.  
Now through its naked space I see houses, parked cars  
And golden steps leading up to a church façade.  
At the top of them, motionless, a man lies sleeping  
Stretched out in the full sun. One hand is slipped inside his thick jacket  
While his head rests on a water bottle as if suspended in mid-air.  
He lies still with eyelids shut, one finger on his lip,  
While the sun scorches his dark skin and tussled hair,  
Dreaming perhaps of home, his children, his mother's voice  
Or the watery journey that exiled him from them.  
He lies outside, oblivious, we talk inside, oblivious.

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