THE SHAPE OF THINGS

'A place is the opposite of empty space. A place
is where an event has taken or is taking place.'
 – John Berger, 'Studio Talk'

It is the emptiness in which things happen,
 the first appearance of snow this year,
 the closest thing we have to home.

It is the space a work creates within itself,
 the image of an empty room
 without any windows or doors.

It is an act of resistance we do not yet understand,
 a city where people fight each other,
 refusing to accept someone else's rules.

It is a terrible prophecy of what might happen,
 an aeroplane without engine or compass,
 a country or nation insistent upon dying.

It is the angel of death whispering in a writer's ear,
 the hammer or spanner used as a weapon of persuasion,
 the lingering presence of the man we have just buried.

It is an old man's book for old men to read,
 a pinch of wonder and half a dozen excuses,
 a list of reasons why we should forget.

It is not night and it is not ignorance,
 it is the interior from which everything comes,
 trailing distance, full of affection, maybe even love.

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