

For a Second-Hand Mentor

Your books kept the noose at bay,
The times there was no one there,
you were, albeit in proxy on the page.
I learnt you backward like a history
and at times your words rose up like ghosts
and left me grasping a realer world
than offered by any fleshed man I'd yet met.
Now, we've shared a public hour and room,
exchanged the civilities of the crowd, a
hiatus in a chain of separation.
Funhouse mirrors impersonated windows
and the distance between us has broken
from a question mark to dull dots
trailing off our days like so
many paralyzed worlds. Is this then
maturity? To renounce all gods
except oneself, alone in the wreckage
no words can glue whole, back into
expectation's crystal bright silence?
Your books are rendered footnotes on your
person. The stars are out of position; rust
stains the sun's edges.
Why must we taste death so
often before we swallow?

John T. Kellnhauser