

Afterlives

What returns beside Foss Island

in the small hours? Sobering shame
or blushes at faults in earlier work,
hummed love songs. Tell me, what became

of so-and-so who survived each knock
and pulled back with a purpose?
Who humiliated? Who had luck

among mentors reduced to shadows
of themselves, or shadows themselves?
A shuddering privet. Who would suppose

just this remained? The broken resolves
to mend by town walls I passed under.
What is there now the pavement shelves

for someone grown older, fonder?

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