Incident in Salzburg

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Passing strange to read
the papers in German here:
*die Amerikanische Luftwaffe*
half a world away
poised for God knows
what last Nixonic thunder
before the last silence
and twilight of the gods.

Watching the mountain
I read in the apple orchard,
bask like a lizard
in the morning sun.

In my landlord’s hall
the framed photo hangs,
shows him proud, erect
in Luftwaffe uniform
beside his shining
tri-motor training plane.

Now he limps among his apple trees,
scything the long grass, heaping it
in rings around the trunks. He props
the leaning trees with sticks, gives
them canes like the one he leans on.

The mountain is lost in a cloud;
in the orchard the sun still shines,
and bees drone in the apple-blossoms;
the birds are unperturbed;
from the mountain comes mutter of thunder.

INCIDENT IN SALZBURG

The one-eyed beggar
sits in the salamander damp
of Neutor tunnel, points at his empty eye socket
as to say: insert coin here.

Instead I toss ten Groschen
in the empty felt hat he holds between
his feet and hear his *Danke schon,*
a damp and rusty croak.

Leaving the tunnel
the bright sun is an affront; children play
happy in the tiny park with the fountain
where the stone fishes spit.

I see the beggar one afternoon
chilling a bottle of cheap wine in the fountain;
by sunset the wine sinks low in the bottle;
the beggar glows like the setting sun.

After dark I pass
for the last time; the beggar is gone;
by the end of a park bench his empty bottle
gleams green in the moonlight.

Redeemable - - that bottle,
worth a Groschen at any store, but the beggar
disdares, repudiates, renounces it - - walks away:
highest art of profligacy.