

BILL HOWELL

NARRATIVE DISMAY

ONCE

Language, luggage: whatever we finally need when I arrive.
Your face graphed in airport glass:
watching me catch you placing me at the end of the line again,
wherever we've left off. Your hand
half-open but not letting go—a stray fidget;
while I hang on to my one-piece limit
beneath a careful but essential nod, glad to have something
solid implied.

TWICE

Nothing ages less than a voice. Or the way the lamplight loved
your hair. And I was in literature, while you were taking
shorthand. Was it two in the morning, or just the two of us
last night? The green wind of your waist became the Milky Way
unravelling a shroud of shouldered moments
into an unknown season. So where were we then, in that room
beyond ourselves, when all the walls dissolved?
Nothing ages better than a choice.

SINCE

Snow on the skylight: the igloo effect. This time the weather
stays in place. Last time this happened, they sent out warnings.
So the piece makes shivery predictions;
while that old fellow you keep hugging to bed gets cagey
& waits. Earning extra points
for offhand understatement, he polishes the edges off
what's left hanging. The consequential event emerges, comes
home to listen & glisten, gets off scot-free—