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Two for Alfred North Whitehead

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Skier

"The experience starts as that smelly feeling . . . ."
—Alfred North Whitehead

The eye hails its friends far off: the cone of the mountain, gradations of white and violet in the snow, and, barely moving against the distant cold, the blue jacket and green cap of a skier. Information only, or so the eye supposes.

But smell knows better.
In the presence of wax, a fire, wet leather, coffee, we inhale feelings. Pleasure and regret sleep in the pungent wool of a sweater. Wood smoke informs the body like a laugh dropping through crevasses from the throat to the loins.

The blue-green figure on the slope is closer than we thought. Her long sweep across the hypothesis of snow enters here, with breath and the shaking out of hair. We take her in, as desire, out of the cold.
Instant Replay

Slowly as in an underwater dance
the shortstop dips to take the ball
on a low hop, swings back his arm, balancing
without thought, all muscles intending
the diagonal to the first baseman's glove.
As the ball leaves his hand, the action stops—
and, watching, we feel a curious poignancy,
a catch in the throat. It is not this play
or this game. The slide into home plate,
the ball escaping the center fielder's glove,
wherever the sweet drive is stopped and held
this surge of feeling rises, like the rush
of sadness or longing we sometimes feel
without remembering the cause of it.

The absolute moment gathers into itself
the rush and muscle of the past, complete,
yet hurling itself forward—arrested
here between its birth and perishing.
Without naming it, we recognize
this atom of our motions. We start
as at the sudden face of an old lover.