

Nighthawks

After Edward Hopper's Painting

- Wolf Wondratschek

It is night
and the city is deserted.
The lucky ones are at home,
or more likely
there are none left.

In Hopper's painting, four people remain
the usual cast, so-to-speak:
the man behind the counter, two men and a woman.
Art lovers, you can stone me
but I know this situation pretty well.

Two men and one woman
as if this were mere chance.
You admire the painting's composition
but what grabs me is the erotic pleasure
of complete emptiness.

They don't say a word, and why should they?
Both of them smoking, but there is no smoke.
I bet she wrote him a letter.
whatever it said, he's no longer the man
who'd read her letters twice.

The radio is broken.
The air conditioner hums.
I hear a police siren wail.
Two blocks away in a doorway, a junkie groans
and sticks a needle in his vein.
That's how the part you don't see looks.

The other man is by himself
remembering a woman,
she wore a red dress, too.
That was ages ago.
He likes knowing women like this still exist
but he's no longer interested.

What might have been
between them, back then?
I bet he wanted her.
I bet she said no.

No wonder, art lovers,
that this man is turning his back on you.