

## *The Future Perfect*

It will be recognizable: your neighborhood,  
with of course some of the bigger trees  
gone for pulp and the more upscale houses  
sporting new riot-proof fencing which  
they seem hardly to need in this calm sector  
whose lawns look even more vacuumed than they used to.  
Only a soft whirr of electric automobiles  
ruffles unburdened air. Your own house looks  
about the same, except for the solar panels.  
Inside, the latest occupants sit facing  
the wall-size liquid crystal flat TV screen  
they haggle and commune with, ordering beach towels  
or stockings, or instructing their stockbrokers,  
while in the kitchen dinner cooks itself.  
Why marvel over windows that flip at a touch  
from clear to opaque, or carpets that a lifetime  
of scuffs will never stain? This all was destined,  
down to the newest model ultrasound toothbrush.  
Only the stubborn, ordinary ratio  
of sadness to happiness seems immune to progress,  
and it will take more time than even you  
have at your disposal to find out why.  
The same and not the same, this venue fascinates,  
spiriting you through closed familiar doors  
on random unremarkable evenings when  
you will have been gone  
for how long?—Just a bit longer than your successors

have had to make these premises their own.  
However much their climate-controlled rooms  
glow vibrant with halogen, they will not see you.  
But they may wonder why, for no clear reason,  
they find their thoughts so often drawn to the past.