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Advice from a Friend

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Advice from a Friend

A variation on Valéry's "Conseil d'ami"

The color of a woman's hair won't matter
when you've lit a fire and poured pure gold
into a tumbler; when the book you hold,
more lasting than her touch, or any letter,

carries you, lost, from page to page, through time—
To her, you appear the same: a faded scribbling
missed or misunderstood. Is it more troubling
that some old tomcat, gazing at his cream,

startles at his reflection, at the voice
purring that he should sleep, sleep off the past?
The fire that warms, burns, too: music is noise

to those who love silence best . . . I still insist
that solitude with a drink by the fire, alone,
is proof against time, and pain, till both are gone.