“Zimmer Imagines Heaven”

I sit with Joseph Conrad in Monet’s garden,
We are listening to Yeats chant his poems,
A breeze stirs through Thomas Hardy’s moustache,
John Skelton has gone to the house for beer,
Wanda Landowska lightly fingers a clavichord,
Along the spruce tree walk Roberto Clemente and Thurman Munson whistle a baseball back and forth.
Mozart chats with Ellington in the roses.

Monet smokes and dabs his canvas in the sun,
Brueghel and Turner set easels behind the wisteria.
the band is warming up in the Big Studio:
Bean, Brute, Bird and Serge on saxes,
Kai, Bill Harris, Lawrence Brown, trombones,
Klook plays drums, Mingus bass, Bud the piano.
Later Madam Schumann-Heink will sing Schubert,
The monks of bendictine Abbey will chant.
There will be more poems from Emily Dickinson,
James Wright, John Clare, Walt Whitman.
Shakespeare rehearses players for King Lear.

At dusk Alice Toklas brings out platters
Of Sweetbreads à la Napolitaine, Salad Livonière,
And a tureen of Gaspacho of Malaga.
After the meal Brahms passes fine cigars.
God comes then, radiant with a bottle of cognac,
She pours generously into the snifters,
I tell Her I have begun to learn what
Heaven is about. She wants to hear.
It is, I say, being thankful for eternity.
Her smile is the best part of the day.

—Paul Zimmer

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