

The blessed Suso in his youth
choosing Wisdom for his beloved

had her painted in all her beauty
by a brother with a gift for that

—the mosaic prohibition
having been for some time now

lifted through imagination
as the eastern fathers taught

the punning pope concurring that icons
bear faithful witness to

the transfiguration of matter by light—
on parchment he carried to his cell

longing to be in touch with her
color line shape divine proportion

her presence preceded by desire
to know to understand more deeply

found only by those who go slowly
in holy curiosity

The beautiful calling to the soul
Ecstasy the soul in ascent

despite the risk of monk's disease
presenting in various guises

—*sloth* for one, the noonday demon
making him indecisive at best

given to despondency
inert before all tasks

falling asleep with his head in the book
waking into a sense of privation

confessing to being abjectly unfit
for such an ambitious vocation

—*hallucinations* for another
giving credence to phantasms

the castrate and cannibal god
casting a leaden pall on things

the god more subtle a certain feeling
of uncertainty something not

quite right about to happen
in sight of an archaic smile

black humor *sotto voce*
behind the saturnine visage

— *eros heroycus* yet another
that melancholic disorder

the soul pulled towards the beloved image
written in the imagination

attendant spirits so agitated
they soon exhaust the red blood

leaving nothing but black bile
a wobbled head filled with vapors

the brain dried the psyche oppressed
ungodly visions and feelings

transforming contemplative intention
into intimate contradictions

an incapacity to conceive
the incorporeal yet desire

to embrace it a violent lust
for the unattainable

which impossibility

exasperated inclination

spiritual depravation
might well drive lovers mad

incontinent as vipers
insatiable beyond restraint

like asses having commerce with women
they claim to despise entirely

leaving the practice in disarray
the order in vile and utter contempt

for which excesses attending physicians
concluding that only by a touch of the spear

that caused it can such a mad wound be healed
prescribed: coitus and drunkenness

and on the theory that opposites
seek balance: fasting and walks

through flowering meadows by gentle streams
where birds and minstrels sing the same song

until the fires burn themselves out
the spooks go back where they came from

the mother Christ hold him again
a satisfaction in her eyes