

The Hunchback in the Park Watching Dylan Thomas

With his heavy brown coat,
 a solitary thread
 caught on the edge of the bench,
 he drinks from a dark bottle
 pulled from an inside pocket and sits
 through the cold afternoon, watching me

(as if I wouldn't notice or mind).
 How the pond takes the sky in,
 the wonder and shuffle of ordinary
 pigeons, even the way the keeper nods
 a discreet tolerance my way—
 our mister hasn't noticed.

With the elms, he plants himself down.
 With the leaves, he sinks into the ground.
 A solitary mister, he seems to mutter
 into the wind, hunched over
 his ragged notebook, alone in his watching,
 looking away when I catch his eye.

He has the eyes of a thinker
 and a drinker—and I'd know
 (though he doesn't know me).
 I read the philosophies of the dead
 leaves, slow snails, young ducks,
 old water, and their insights I keep

to myself. Many figures come
 here and go—the dark-suited
 and stiff men, wet dogs snuffling
 in their honesty, children with hand-me-down

Andy Jackson. 'The Hunchback in the Park Watching Dylan Thomas'.
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cruelties and language games, nurses
on lunchbreaks with tender eyes—

none of them without fault. I
hesitate to say how mister appears,
but I imagine his lines are straight
on the left-hand side, crooked on the right.
When the day begins to fade
and his bottle is as light

as the glass of it, he straightens up,
brushes some fragile, natural thing
from his coat, and I watch him shrink
back into the city. Towards a warm
and safe place he must walk,
followed by his own shadow.

Andy Jackson