

STAR SALESMAN

I'm native to this territory, born
To local idiom and dialect,
Politically correct, at ease on stage
With mini-calculators, cabs and booze.

I sprawl the king-size hotel bed awhile;
My all-wool alter ego hangs alert,
Fresh-pressed and waiting for the morning's cue.
My sixty-dollar name-designer tie
Most likely has a spot that must be sponged
Before I sleep. My Gucci shoes are shined
For each rehearsed approach to win a role
For sweet success tomorrow. Or next week.

A dozen times a month I play this lead
(And nothing but heroically blank verse
Suffices to recount the full extent),
Instead of hotdogs, dine on haute cuisine.
The bottom line is (how I hate that line!)
The customers aren't clapping for our number.
However primed and powdered or threadbare
They make it sound, their script says NO, a word
Of lead and ice that lodges in soft parts
Beneath my belt, attacking gourmet spoils.

I'm sure you note the comic undertones
That permeate my neo-classic farce.
Still, I provide expected locomotion
For style and polish to complete the plot:
To make the entrance and escort the client
To lunch, silk lining iridescent wit,
Lapels well-tailored with sincerity,
Pants creased with confidence. Bright anecdotes
Emerge from pockets, practiced protocol
And uptown jokes, a little charge card magic--

And when the scene plays out, the wound-up mime
Propels the props to yesterday's airport
Where soon the custom-made costume, almost
Adept enough to give its own performance
Will go inanimate back in the plane.
At last unfolding in home's terminal
To wait in line in Ma Bell's crowded alley,
I hope the slept-in depths yield change enough
To call-- report the bust to amateur
Directors of these high-camp, one-act flops--

And maybe learn I don't still head the cast.