

The New Criterion

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The casino

by David Solway

A lot happens in that dark place,
the annex to the glittering edifice
where the clients sit
passing the time of day
ordering drinks and trying their luck.
The important work gets done
in that pokey, smoke-filled vault
at the back of the casino
where the real players
chomp on cigars, trade off-color jokes,
shuffle cards, raise the ante,
recount their manifold exploits
in the politics of the underworld,
listening to a blaring radio
while casting an attentive eye on the rigged slots
rolling their fruit on the TV monitors.
Of course, fortunate dupes of the turbulent underlords,
we're not aware of what goes on
in the room at the back of our innocence,
dingy and apsidal,
home to the clergy of unshaven misfits
where the progress of the game is determined,
where the deck we're issued is already marked
and where the music and the poetry come from.
There is no reason to complain,
no reason to cleanse the chamber
and expose the racket.
If we only continue playing,

no way we can lose.

David Solway's newest poetry volume, *Installations* (Véhicule Press), was released in the Fall of 2015.

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