

Edward Harsen

“to Business”

From the time I recognized
the road to Taso-chi,
I realized I had nothing to do
with birth and death.
-The Song of Enlightenment

These desk descriptions, I say,
I will read on the train,
Everyone I see is reading this morning --

a marketing report, the mix of newspapers.
Across from me a bald man is translating
the Italian sheets across his briefcase
with a red mechanical pencil.

Surprised, I read the upside down headings,
"Caso di incestes," and "Fornicazione,"
while he stares into the dance of grammar and tense.
I can watch his translation pass across his face
Into the pencil notes, the margins of his work.

Whispering a curse, he digs into the dictionary
And checks me with a guilty glance.
This is no business for me.
I will read on the train --

here is a silk sleeve
with a simple spade leaf imprint design,
rose on rose.
here is a train trestle
grey against the rising Wednesday smoke
and the working sun.