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Poetry: 'Self-Portrait in a John Ashbery Book'

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‘Self-Portrait in a  
John Ashbery Book’

Discovered pencilled in to Senate House’s copy of *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*.

Looking into the back of a spoon (as Parmigianino did it)  
Trying to pronounce elliptical French at four in the morning  
(Or was it German? or Italian?  
It was one of the Modernists’ stolen tongues, anyway  
And I think that might be the point.  
Probably French)  
As the sun rose like the moon, or  
Like a yawning man’s bald head hugged by  
The parenthesis of the clouds  
A *boules* lawn was being planted from grass seed  
By tortoise men and turtle women, who  
— in some months —  
Will be closer to the dirt than the tips of the blades ever were.