

At Kelmscott Manor

Stella Davis

Try as I might, I can't picture you in here:
coming up the lane, perhaps, with a shout,
or waving from the gate, or at best
standing in the doorway,
for ever about to arrive or depart.

She, however, is present in every corner,
passing from sofa to sofa, trailing silk;
and from the friend's hand, framed, are hung
those most compelling images:
your daughters' faces, never their own again.

It isn't any wonder you rarely stayed,
but roamed as restless as a railway,
pushing away at possibility, dragging
Homer and Marx along for company:
your different life.

Returning,
what you learned was how not to possess
what most you loved: a house, a woman;
not to possess, but love them
without doubt or pause.

Taking its minor turn among
the long achievements
of your foreshortened life,
this loving and not owning
remains remarkable,

;

And I like to think that every stone here
knows it: that this aged house
stands up for you, and makes at last
the place you did not own
utterly yours.