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Almost as If

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Almost As If

*The if-feeling is not a feeling which accompanies the word “if.”*
—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Here is a word
with a corona of uses
ghostly intentions
shady senses
nevertheless when pressed
a (mostly) single physiognomy
*if* (fr. OE *gif*)

what if
if/then
if and only if (*iff*)
although
whether
it were
an either/or
it wouldn’t matter

but one can feel *if*
differently
imagine Iphigeneia
(called Iphimedea by Hesiod)
her fate set to music
a symphony
in *f*-sharp major
among suppositions
subjunctives
systems
of suspicion
as if
our future
were junking its alternatives
into a past that never was

Hence _almost_
more or less
incompletely
*l’entretemps*
ellipses
deferring interminably
the messianic decision

“if one were
to take these words
seriously
they would
lead
to the madhouse” (Blanchot)
so I take them foolishly
stopping as I go

our time is nearly up
our present
not quite closed
made of
nomadic terms
falling just short
of arrival anywhere

fruitless conditions
refractory facts
useless attention
qualifications
scrolling pointlessly
pale singularities
defeating the sequence
of what happens