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Intermediate Values

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Intermediate Values¹

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Coming from then continuously
to where I find myself, I must
have passed through every point between –
uncountably many presents – each one
lost the instant it passed.

But what's grasped at all is held
because of that endless flux underfoot,
not on account of here and now. We see
only what is presently remembered,
not what's present, which will, in time,

be known only by memory. Absent that,
the mind's landscape, each minute would be
a blur of changing weather. Even today's
lack of form will come to mark us,
dividing then from here, thing from nothing.

Past imperfectly constructs the present.
All that's lost, as now will shortly be,
sustains us, even though it hold no ground,
is gone sooner than a spoken word, dust blown away,
the glass drained and its ring dried on the table.

¹An earlier version of this poem appeared in *The Shape of Content*, edited by Chandler Davis, Marjorie Senechal and Jan Zwicky, A.K. Peters/CRC Press, Wellesley, MA, 2008.