
ANTHOL

ANTHOL 3

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GAYLE ANDERSON

ON AGECOMING

i'm going to die!
i'm going to die!
dear god in heaven,
i'm really going to die!

i do my
exercises in cold morning
twilight belly
breasts and thighs
tug-a-brush
cross myface wash
undereyes with milk
oil myskin afterbath
before
hugging towel running
shivering
in myroom single
girlish laugh i nowhear
when never before
iheard
part of it was;
lazy curlingcat moving
softly on mink pads
as a child
i despised her indolence
suspect was her inner peace
she clings bawling
afterme as onlycat in a dream silences
hear me
world from milkbowls;
i would welcome raw
fingertips warm washcloths
worn gentle:
my belly aches!
my belly aches!roams
red in killing
lioness tempered heat
sinful bred strawberries
bed next to vermillion,only this
mylove,only this
hold me when i'm dying.

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ANDRE FARKAS

somehow

somewhere

on a riverbank

somehow

the indian said
between beers

all

this

made

sense

but now

sometime later

from different places

the indian said
it's gotten out of hand
and shaped itself
into a fist.

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EVE

scars on your body
lying in mystery
silently welcomes me
come it cries

i, an eager explorer
lost in your geography
of unknown terrains
push on desperately
to find the source of your echo

and in the clearing of the moment
you stand against the want of time
and i lean against a lampost
on the corner of some ancient history
selling your hieroglyphic memory
which i can't understand

your tears are some rainy season clue
drenching all eager explorers, lost as i,
revealing in the rainbow
times past and time to come
time will be no different
empty pails will remain empty
and your scars remain in mystery

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INDIAN SPRING

spring slipped
on a piece of ice
breaking my back
with corpses of racoons
skunks
cats and car axles
rotting on the side of the road

crawling promises
/on all fours/
april
/cruel she is/
looked out from the ditch
grinning

in my screams of accusation
i see me reflected
meeting victims
agreeing in the night
smiling back at the coming spring

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HUNGARIAN STORY # 1

in gas sleep of giving birth
i dreamt of machines

in a sealed temple
of unclimable smooth walls
the machine lived
it was made of shining copper people
instead of cogs and wheels
and they sang a metal tune.

in this dream
i'm part of the machine
but a part that doesn't work
lying on the floor
watching the machine keep on.

i begin to scream
LET ME BACK!
I BELONG!

in afterbirth
i couldn't look at my son for three days.

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ARTY GOLD

I am a surfer at 12 o'clock high
keeping to the crests of life
the good times will never pass me by

for I also have a large net I cast
out over the calendar
and it nets me some fine days

I dance free of the fates
like in a western where the cowboy
dodges every bullet

as approaching the prime target
or the gold mine
with bandits all around it

and suddenly one day I'll reach in
grab that bag of loot
and ride off on my horse.

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the sea lustrous as a snake's belly
th thousand scales delicately
burning incandescent flotsam
of overhead sun baseball diamonds
by the million
hinged as seen overhead from airplanes
approximate scales little diamonds
approx
imate

(and they are milky in texture as they rock
to and fro as th sea does

one great quilt beginning in Boston Harbour and
extending to Lisbon
like a net for falling acrobats
and
Icarus's
who lifted by the fact the sun is warm follow it
its beams,the area
shone down on

capturing azures and coppers
hopelessly on fractional
canvasses.
The sea is not
exotic
the sea
is mediterranean
middle
of the earth the sea
is birth
the sea is the floating gestures
branches on it make,rocking
to and fro
with green berries
and wood splinters
of men who
desire passage at certain speeds.

the sea is interrupted life of liquid gold

(th dark blues and azures
are man's
anticipation.

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LAURENCE HUTCHMAN

GENERAL HOSPITAL

the hospital overlooks the city
here air is radiant with fall
the nurses talk with patients
the cafeteria is warm in the sunlight.

an old lady with a rouge mask
smiles under bright spectacles
and light glows weakly
on the silver and the plates.

among the toys of the souvenir shop
an old couple struggles towards the door
mirages of splintered cars
pass silently through them.

world of pain in the glass
we see but cannot feel
outside the last blaze of colour
clings to grey-white trunks.

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SPEEDING DOWN THE HIGHWAY

O Canada on this grey Monday afternoon
speeding down the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway
little light between boundaries
the towns flow off the cloverleafs:
Cornwall, Kingston, Belleville...

a Montreal weekend:
a walk through Place Ville Marie,
mirrored passages of fashion
grey universals in a cold blue street.

young man lying in shock
clear eyes on a smooth wet forehead,
gulls silent above the glitter of lights
people search for pleasure in the fogbound city.

"...Yes you go faster now
but go nowhere..."

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conversations through a humming engine
academic history of the U.S. and England
socialism, interpersonal relations
down the highway through the silver uneven skies.

uniformity:
M.I., Route Nationale
along the Autostrada
towards the frontiers
steady now...the curve
fire to fire makes the blaze go higher.

destination beyond me
what of separate ideology?
no comfort in the pine trees
where the deer decay.

highway move on,
grey, silver, dark and green
where have we been?

now, not the destination
but how we get there.

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SNOW ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY

the townhouses below this balcony
out of Brueghel's canvas
beyond pylons
spirits doomed to wander.

winter's return,
shuddering from nature
children and mothers
lost in the white wind.

here in the country, evening
the moon turns slowly in the clouds
the stars glow alone
in harmony.

yesterday's green is gone,
tiny strands of your hair
against the close sudden candle
snow blows through pines of the forest.

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DESTRUCTION OF THE THEATRE WALL

the last piece of the wall stands
the artist before his paintings
"For five years I have come here
I will not go to Dominion Square..."

sketches of old Montreal
a picture of a yellow flower
portrait of a woman in a mist
before the mouth of a steam shovel.

splintered mirrors on the balcony
gold disks shine through tangled wire
Aphrodite, Artemis, the children
the phoenix and the fountain.

the rain is turning into snow
soon the drill will begin again
he watches the crowd move by
"C'est la vie." slowly sips his coffee.

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FOR OVER MOUNT ROYALE

there are bars across the window
and we are isolated
with our own separate illusions
in the comfort of this room.

we leave the apartment
walk slowly up Mount Royale
trees gnarled against the hospital
guards before an embassy recently raided.

then the steps through dirty snow
a few dogs, nurses, birds and children
noise in the mist
and as we climb higher the view disappears.

at the top, alone, nothing
grey, still and solemn
through the black trees
there is no world.

fog drifts over the hall,
the steps echo over silent floors
under pastel pictures of Quebec's history
and the old man talks about survival.

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FILM IN PARIS

after tipping the usher
we sat down
listened to the newscaster:
Londonderry, August, 1969,
beyond these dark heads
petrol bombs explode on the screen.

earlier we were in Ireland
ten thousand Catholics
broke the police cordon
battled the Protestant mob.

the reporters lied
the crowds smashed cameras
just as in this newsreel.

now it's safely history
we settle back and watch
Once Upon a Time in the West.

outside the sun bristles the leaves
and workers are drilling
under l'Arc de Triomphe.

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BARRY KATZ

SURE WISH SOMEHOW

The city paved round our circle, right in front of the houses. Mud packed flat;we use to play nazi tortured spies or doctor in big empty fridgerater crates. Had ta always tie them to the phone pole in the middle of the circle. Those were the best days. No school. In the winter the city filled our circle with snow;built the greatest forts. Use ta throw ice-balls at the cars coming right for us an try ta scare the sitting people on the bus; catch them when they were looking straight at us. Get 'em right in the face. Did they jump.

For the rest of the time, when the snow was gone, we'd mostly play doctor; the girls were mostly minor cases or nurses cause no real girl use ta like to see blood. Stayed lots a early afternoons right after lunch examining eachother, taking turns being doctor or drive'n the ambulance bike pulling the wagon with the wounded in it. Was a great place. Had no crates, so we could climb up the pole support wire an see who shook the pole hardest. Sometimes most afternoon we'd try the rock and go to the field ta get bullrushes. Make fuzz bombs an get them from the next block soon as we'd a captured back our crate. Use to break up the fatest rush heads on our rock. Get 'em real good. That rock did the best job. Could never get the fuzz off.

Every week we use ta try a whole bunch a ways to move it out a its hole. Run over at the new houses an snitch boards ta shove under the rock. Push it. Rock it back and forth. Once we tied rope round the bumpy part, but that could never a worked for sure, cause it was no good and broke. We all ended up on the new kid on account that he was wearing his good pants and took up at the end of the line so no mud would get him. We all fell on him. I think his mother told him not to play with us cause she thought we busted his arm on purpose; anyway, any a us could a beat him up without fallen on him if we wanted to. He was just peewee and it seemed no reason could move that lump a rock.

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I guess we all felt like pushen the day after. Think it was before lunch. It sure took us a long time, all those days an most a the morning. But we sure did it. There was lots a mud from all the rocken, an now I'm right cause it was before lunch when we got it up an out. Had to be. Ivan was a day grader. We use ta all be too small for school, an Iv, when we saw him, was always going home to have lunch. That's when we got his shoes. Had to do something. It was near lunch an we had no real good attack plans.

From my back yard, snuck up on Iv's balcony. I member getting his shoes cause we saw them an got the idea. We all thought for sure if he had no school shoes, he'd a been allowed ta come out an play. Took his shoes with his stupid stripped laces an ran. Fast so no one could see; sept she saw. Saw us straight through her kitchen window. His mother saw us runnen an we kept on runnen. Back ta the circle. The secret hidding spot. Could hear his mother yellen our names an the dogs barken.

We got ta our circle okay sept she was at the gate an we saw her. She just kept on commen at us sort a on a tilt, cockeyed. She sure must a been mad. Just like ya see the t.v. big guys do when a good fight starts - let out a yell before she got too near. Threw the shoes into the mud. Pushed the rock inta its hole. Ran all our might out.

Can never remember who was with us; the guys. Next day, Iv was allowed to wear his runnen shoes; not me. Sure wish someone would a swiped my shoes; somehow.

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ENDURATIONS ESCAPE

We try so hard to endure
sometime body
sometimes mind
where things are hidden
hands seldom look,
listening carefully for
words from the speechless sky
shouting logic and sanity into every moment,
fleeting
in pauses of ourkind thrust
even seed under stone
finds way to the sun
born
each rootfinger damp
bends
seeps eaten around rock
and as air prints
fade with motion
away
unable to be an
other here
you were witness
it anew
you
stand in surprize
there was a sign
a shadow to hold
see
to love
excite and cry
' I was once there too . . '

. . .

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. . .

After then
now
again
you self are alone, a balance of words and hopes and things to touch; under smallest clam there rises its lie; under every tongue rolls one soft squeezed pearl, stirring still sand under; empty eyes to feed, reaches to reach; creeping so too, scratching stone, etching your story on ones bones, your dreams; as each first ones cry uncurls from
underground thighs
green and blind
ones kiss of final breath
spins winds around
your bright night full
ten thousand way crossed centuries
alive
to live and dead
all you
you all to another before
gray matter pore sucked away to some where; days never fold in whorlds where dancing butterflies print abstracts in the snow and pollen pods float pure as pure; purer than any touch, arched parallels rainbow planes; probability grown wild, pressing wind on from nothing as all; in silence, i wish for no one, self or any one else; visions climb to the sun.

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DIANE KEATING

CORE OF A CYCLONE

Sleep saws off the top of my head
spills lead into the bloodstream
sinking like a dead body
to clog the narrow exit of my heart
so walls burst
shoot out beams
flatten stars
and I am the core of a cyclone
alone until a woman appears
draped in red linen.
She stands at the top of spiralling stairs
throwing pamphlets
that drift in flocks of pigeons
I'm helping her
but each time
near the edge
I'm electrocuted by lightning from four corners
twisted through long sharp wires
into a glass booth where
a bronze coin is placed under my tongue
my eyelids sewn shut
my arms folded in.
To escape I run
down the fading stairs
faster
faster
out of control

I grab
for the iron railing
but it bursts into feathers
I open my mouth to scream
but a robin falls out
silent
bleeding
spreading a blood lake below
in which I must drown.

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. . .

I jump off
turning
fading
until I'm anchored to bones
wrapped in flesh
soothed
by the heat of my breath
and the light from the hall
suddenly
blocked by a man
with wings hovering in the doorway
his body made of congealed shadow
full of eyes.
He smells of lonely places
long tunnels
locked rooms
but this time there's no escape
I have fallen into a crevice of reality
so he enters me
creeping into my brain
until I wake with a scream
and weep
and reach out
lonlier than before

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RITES AND MYSTERIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Did you ever have an uncle
a friendly uncle
who changed you
into the king's youngest daughter
whenever he came to visit?

He was as strong as a tower
without windows or doors
as secretive as a knight inside armor
with a laugh like a waving flag.

Hair grew out of his nostrils
and along the back of his hands.
On his little finger
he wore a gold ring that hurt
like a stone in a shoe
when he squeezed you
or pulled you into his lap
to play silly games
tickling you all over
with fingers like teeth
teeth of the wolf
that waited under the bed.

But when you tried to tell your mother
dropping crumbs like Hansel
she said you must be nice
because he was so fond of you
and had no children of his own
poor man.

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. . .

He came once a year
when the heat whined and
quivered among the opening leaves.
You always knew he was there
by the box of chocolates on the hall table
and the smell of his cigar
that hid down cracks of the chesterfield
to haunt you
like a scar on your sister's forhead.

It was the time
he gave you the rhinestone scotty dog
with one red eye.
Do you remember?
He always came to kiss you goodnight
his shadow a frog prince on the wall
and to play mousey
the game when you wiggled
your hand under the blankets
and he tried to catch it.

But this time
your parents were out
and he changed the rules
so his hand was the mouse
that stole into your bed
sneaking up your leg
into your pajama pants.

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Then it was your turn
your hand crawling
breathless
closer and closer
to the shaggy nest where
the white snake waited
uncoiled.

Then it was his turn again
and he crept under the blankets
adding more rules
ancient mysteries
old skin pressed to young skin.

Afterwards
the leaves grew full and shadowy
for your eyes were opened
you knew your nakedness
and hid among the trees of the garden.

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Pushing through the revolving doors
of a department store
I notice to one side
a woman waiting
glasseyed and blonde
holding the hand of a boy
in a brown snowsuit
who squirms madly
a mouse trapped in long grass

then as sudden as glass splintering
she slaps across his upraised face
and my pulse flickers
like the lights in a storm
not for a mouse or a moth
or an earthworm
caught out in the rain
but o
those slugs of guilt
multiplying under her heart
leaving a path of slippery pain
she can't quite locate
and what of it!
why should I be hurting?

the boy will grow up
a blonde
handsome man
pushing through revolving doors
as if his hands were at a throat
his vision splintered
so he doesn't notice
to one side

a woman waits

holding the hand of a boy

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STEPHEN KILBY

"NURTURANCE"

Bold arms of sympathy
The warm, soothing breast
Bare and exposed,
To all the cruel lights of day,
The watcher sees and sees again,
As if viewing tiny echoes,
Then sobs his lonely
Feelings out,
And hears the reassuring rustle
Of her clothes.

All the pain and pity
At his tear ducts,
All man's misfortunes
Whimpered in his cries,
The moment when each man is young
A small defenseless baby,
Who can't shake the world
No matter how he tries.

A chilling time of closeness he may cherish,
The quivering touch at silk
And satin down,
The cold collective fury
Rising in nocturnal sighs,
The stillness,
The serenity he's found.

Perhaps the grizzled phrasings
Of outsiders
May mar the quiet, simple thing
They've done,
But no act of man can disolve their union:
Son with mother,
Lying as one.

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CAROL LECKNER

SITTING OUTSIDE

I remember all the times I was here.
The voices at work
        it could have been here or there
        I don't care, the sounds are the same
        the sensitivity is cloaked

I am
    sitting in the same place
  but my back is turned
  and any moment
        I expect
  a bee

There are drills and saws of men building a hall
two women in saris walk by.
My back hurts for no reason, and the swimming pool
has not been filled. They are painting it.

The Indian people just walked by and one bowed to me.
This is an ashram.

I keep seeing black insects running across my line of
vision, strong at the periphery and disappearing
at the centre.

There was a man before, soft in his walk, wearing
a flannel shirt, building the hall with the others,
I am a woman, and went before to visit them.
Though they were occupied,
like all times a woman visits men at work,
they stopped and watched me a little.

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This is a Canadian ashram, or yoga camp; no booze, no drugs,
no noise, no sex. Am I repressed? Here, there is only
high-mindedness, the path to enlightenment lies
this way in self-fulfillment and detachment.
I am sitting on a rock
looking at the mountains, fresh in a hush of colour,
some blossoms and perfume

when I was on kibbutz
I would visit the men
at work or
they would visit me and
it was the same

they are not detached here
I am, repressed

Only adults and gum bubble. I as an addict of life
am an adult retrogressed, caught in a middle where
the ideas come by like the insects of my eye and die
before their centre.

Grass grows upwards and bees fly sideways. I worry
they will sting me

over there
when they want
an affair,
they go on a one day trip
to a strange town and
rent a room

here it is the forest
or the dunes down the way,
one close to the road,
the other by a mountain.
only the mosquitoes to worry about,
and your karma.

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All the spiders
run away from me,
  thank God. What do I
  need them for?
In Greece, our resident
French writer of
three lines a day
came to "Araignée!"
They were big and colour-speckled,
like fish with fat legs,
land octopi.
It became a game
and we laughed when I shouted
"Robert! Araignée!"

  all these refuges are
  insane. what makes me
  need them?
  as though there were
  some place
  to breathe

Everything rustles now

One night at the ashram
we watched a movie
and I felt I was on kibbutz.
If I go to Beit Keshet this summer
I will be at the ashram
speaking Hebrew
and Zionism will take the place of
enlightenment.

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When I was sorting apples (not my regular job then)
Daniel, who had written five pages of a scenario
he'd never thrown away, came by
for some tea on our break of plastic cups
and I saw his eyes, the way a man
looks at a woman he knows he'll never have
and settles for that.
Looks like that can keep you warm on nights
you're lonely/not detached.

Go and build your yoga hall. Two ants on my right,
that I can see, a red and a black one on my left,
and one beat-it spider,
though I just blinked and now they're all gone,
it's just me sitting on the rock looking
at the mountains in the distance
wondering if there is a choice I must make
and what it is I must choose if there is.

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It's the end of another year and I'm still talking about growth!

Still, silver limpets in the sky, aside, and friendly conversations, it is my mind's playing I'm listening to as I watch the clock. In a few hours it will be - another beginning. Another chance to learn something, benefit in some way. Grow more. The divider - one minute to, one minute to what? Tomorrow? But tomorrow is the first day of my life, isn't it, not another new year?

Oh bring it all out! The glasses and the drinks - let me see it all - in celebration. Not penance. Retribution. Or wonderment. The growth of one day into another, they all pass so quickly. When I was younger,I used to wonder what I'd be doing tonight.

Well, what is it? Haven't I said enough? Do you need resolutions to bind me? And promise what? To be better? To give more? To love purely? Demand less? Know more? These you say I am to promise?

Oh, I stand in pastels, you know, sketched by thumb and forefinger, smudges here and there and colours finely tuned. I don't know who did the drawing. It just hangs there, in a corridor, on a wall, some passageway or another. Some people like it. It doesn't matter. It'll yellow or something. Pictures don't last forever. And you want resolutions? Allright! I'll try to find some light here.

No, I knew it wouldn't be good enough. You push me too much. I never know what to say, what you want.

And I don't need any lectures. I'm an adult now. I know when to put on the breaks: push, pull, stop and start. I have my eyes. You know. So what if I thought it would be easier than at the beginning. Oh? Tomorrow is the first day of my life? Is it tomorrow yet?

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I suppose this will be a prose poem in tone. Or a tone poem in prose. You see, the resolutions you ask me for are like that. They're words. I can't contract myself to a set of words, a hundred or less. A paragraph is a lot.

Let me go for a walk around the block and let my conscience have some air.

Okay, it's a new day. It's tomorrow. Right now. (This is a supposition.) I am waking up. (It's the morning.) It's winter so the sun isn't up yet. My curtains are open and the light shines in from the street. I get up. It's the beginning of my life. And I get dressed - again!

I didn't approach it right? When I got up, I was supposed to have sensed something different? In the air - in the window - under the door - sorry about the facetiousness. It's the morning. Everything is the same in the morning except the sky. The sky is either gray or blue or both in between. The difference in the day may come later, as I progress through it -

---

Why isn't that good enough? Isn't it the truth or am I not saying it right? Am I too skeptical? I don't agree enough? Are there rules to this game? So tomorrow is the first day of my life. Well. Why tomorrow? And how do you account for yesterday? I am the summation of all my parts.

Anyway, I am. That I am.

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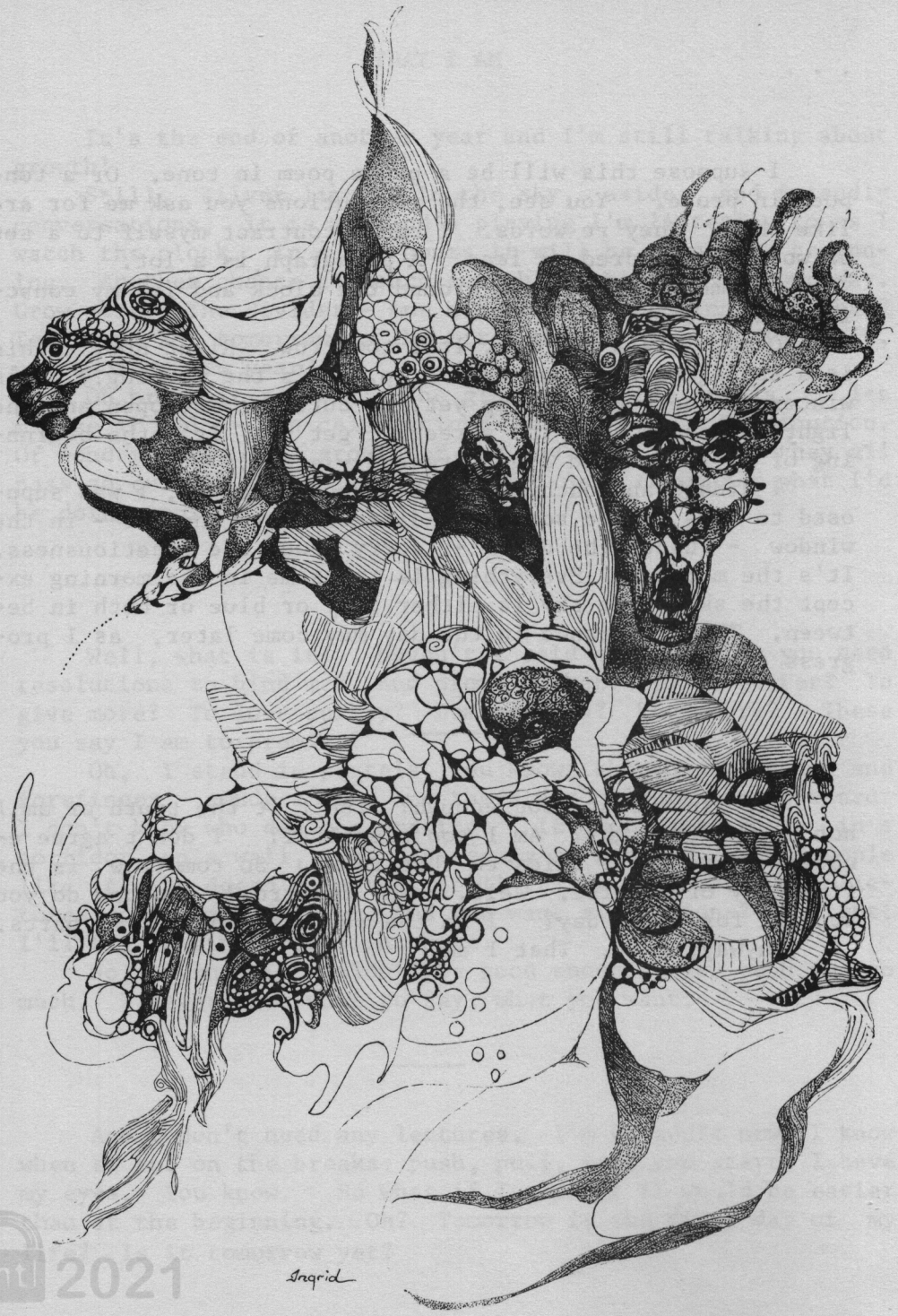

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PETER MADDEN

ONE FOR THE ROAD

Eight-thirty. Candlelight. Table set with wine. Two of us, watching the dark dropping outside, regretting the waning of summer.

The doorbell screamed through the house like a migraine. She turned from the window, soft blue eyes darting up to my shadowed face. "Do you think it's him?"

I walked down the hall half-hoping it wasn't. He was on the run. Friends had phoned from Kingston to warn me. Yesterday. When he hadn't shown I was relieved, but anxious; caught between concern for myself and him.

Why the concern? We'd never been close. I owed him nothing personally. But we had gone through it, in our different ways, and I guess we belonged, now and forever to that fraternity of sufferers who'd squandered years of their lives gnawing daily stomach knots down yellowing skeletal corridors. Prison.

He, who trusted childlike in the charity of friends, strangers and other people, had suffered far more than I, even on the outside. Now he was running, hiding, dodging the cold wheezing breath and steel fangs of legal bloodhounds; while I, guarding my life's savings of half-earned pennies, was standing still, strangling in the glorious illusion of growing permanent roots; perhaps more frightened, more guilty; perhaps running faster, perhaps further.

I opened the door. He swayed in the foyer, grey eyes roadmapped red and glazed, unshaven, grinning. He stumbled into the hallway almost tripping over his bags, bumped from wall to wall through to the dining room.

He dropped his bags. "Well Peter..." he puffed, arching forward,hands on the small of his back, arms angled out like chicken wings, strutting, grinning.

"Well Billy...?" I stood facing him across the room, searching for something to say like a kid caught without his homework done, realizing how little I really knew him. "Are you...uh...are you hungry?" I asked, pointing to the table, and to Joan who was labouring to smile through her frown. "You remember Joan?" I tried.

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For the first time Billy actually focused on something. I watched him squinting, cocking his head slightly forward. Then he nodded and rolled his eyes up as if trying to follow a fly across the ceiling of his mind. He sucked at his teeth, swaying, grinning. "I met her once at the pen didn't I?"

"No," I said, "it was in Ottawa, when the guys went to the play."

"Ah-h-h...," His eyes widened,shone; his face tightened and he began strutting up and down the room. "I didn't ask this punk to break that fucken window!" he recited -- exactly as he'd delivered them in performance. As he continued,I could see him,again,back there on stage in the prison, his black legal gown billowing, him fingering, the buck-toothed white bib, pacing, growling, snapping out his lines beneath the lights, before a sell-out audience. "Remember that?" he laughed.

Smiling, I motioned him to a chair, but he swiveled and continued his pacing. I sat down and began serving untill Billy stopped his pacing to stand swaying over the table, grinning. "Got any whiskey?" he asked.

"Never use it."

"Shit." he breathed, "Well what have you got?"

"How about a beer?"

"You sure you got some?" he asked

"Yeah," I said, "in the fridge."

Billy sucked at his teeth and pushed out his lip, not nodding, but bobbing his head slightly which, in the silent jargon of the prison meant: yeah, well it don't do me much good in the fridge. So I went and opened him a beer. He grabbed it, drank half of it down in a gulp, walked to the end of the hall and back; then stood swaying over the table.

Joan glanced at him; then me -- back to him. Back to me. I knew she was asking: What are you going to do?

I didn't know. I was on parole -- for five years. If Billy was found with me, chances were we'd both be sent back. But what could I do? Send him away? Back to die a little more each day in the stinking pen? Nothing deserved that. And, after all, what had Billy done? What terrible crime had he committed? On parole he'd felt the bigger prison outside closing in on him; felt, as we all do sometime, an immense weight of inadequacy, cold sweat urgency,

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frustration ... subtle shafts of prejudice...cold shoulders, closed doors. To do something, be something; to belong, be a part, no matter how small...of...whatever it is we think we have -- all locked up and guarded by laws -- we think we own. Society? Life?

I'd heard of his progress after release. He was an addict; had been one most of his life. He started using when he got out. They couldn't prove it, but they suspected, waited. Then I heard he'd quit. Just like that! The authorities 'll tell you it's not possible to shake drugs "cold turkey" on the street. Only in jail, out of sight out of mind. Well, Billy Miller did it. I know. I don't know how but he did.

Billy pulled out a chair and sat waving his beer around like a candle's flame flickering in the wind. He bowed his head, whispered, "I couldn't take it anymore. Y'know what I mean Peter?"

I closed my eyes, nodded. Yeah, I knew.

"I had a car, didya hear? Well, I had one, but that weasel refused me permission to drive it. Not only that, he refused me permission to leave the Kingston City limits. Christ, I didn't even know where the hell they were. Y'know, he even threatened to put me back in. How about that? An'you know what he said to me after I made the parole? No ... he told me point blank I was lucky he was on holiday when the parole board met because if he'd've had anything to say in the proceedings I'd've never got out. Now you tell me...how the fuck am I supposed to communicate with an asshole like that?"

I didn't know. "What happened, finally?"

"Nothing. No work, fuck all to do in Kingston, y'know, I was...y'know what I was? I was a fucken bum, worse even, because I was moochin' off friends. And what's more, fuckface made me report to him every week, warning me I better get a job, but doin' bugger all to help me find one. How the fuck does he expect anyone to hire me when the parole board won't even trust me to drive my own fucken car?

"Shit man, I was really fucked up. I was nowhere without a fucken paddle, y'know.....So what the fuck, I hit the booze a little -- pretty hard -- and he heard about it and gave me another warning about that ...

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"I just fucken well couldn't take it anymore, y' know Peter, it was like in the play, like everything was closin' in on me. I mean, I was more in prison out there...

"Anyways, yesterday I had a few drinks, early ... went downtown. It was noon. All the people coming, going ... places, y'know, and me, I was just standin' around like a yo-yo, watching them, doing fuck all myself. I had to move, y'know what I mean? Fuck them all; I served my time. I jumped in my car and took off, and it didn't matter a pinch of coonshit where I went ..."

Billy sloshed the beer around, bowed his head deeper. "Now..." he began, "I don't know...don't know what to do. I need a few days to straighten myself out. I'm tired Peter. I'm really fucken tired."

"C'mon," I said, "I'll make up the couch."

Billy followed me into the front room, sank into a chair and fumbled with his boots. "Y'know, I wanna talk to you in the morning I want you to listen and tell me what you think I should do."

"Okay," I said, "I'll take the day off." I stood to leave.

Billy sat, hunched over, swaying like an old woman over her beads, his face almost as grey as his hair in the arc of dull light. He opened his mouth and jerked his head up, reddening eyes searching the shadows. The effort was too much. He closed his eyes and dropped back on the couch labouring for breath. "Need shleep," he mumbled, more words, faint, unintelligible, growing to snores. I turned out the lamp and returned to the table and Joan, and our untouched plates.

She took my hand as I dropped into the chair. "What are you going to do?" she asked.

I massaged my tingling forehead, exhaustion and pain dissolving through my system like a drug, paralyzing my head, knotting my gut. "I don't know," I sighed, "think about it in the morning ..."

"He shouldn't stay here," she pleaded, tightening her grip.

I closed my eyes. My head felt like an anchor that had to be set down. My tongue was thick with the million prickling possibilities racing there from my mind. I couldn't

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explain. "He needs a day. I mean, he can't leave until he knows where he's going."

"But what if they're looking for him? What if they find him here? They'll take you too!"

"No," I said, "legally...he isn't a violator until his parole officer issues a warrant for him." I didn't know if that was right, but it sounded good.

"But they must have a warrant already."

"Not likely," I yawned, "they probably don't know he's gone yet; and, if we can get him back before they find out ..." I closed my eyes and shook my head, crying inside, for Billy who was lost and who reminded me that I too was lost. "I don't know...we'll wait...tomorrow...see what we can find out.

I looked up for her response. Her eyes pleaded for my safety. I nodded, trying to say: let me take care of it. I stood to clear the table. She followed me into the kitchen. We met face-to-face by the sink. She eased onto her toes and fell forward into my arms, kissing my chest. I kissed her forehead,her nose and eyes, her lips; then lifted her gently and carried her to bed.

Neither of us slept much. Joan kicked and tossed most of the night, while gas bubbles and acids ripped through my gut, blinding white flashes striking, like nearby lightning, behind my closed lids, until the first grey light peeped through the sides of the blind. Sandy-eyed I jumped out of bed, half-dressed and stumbled round the kitchen trying to make coffee, but forgetting what I was doing and starting off into the easily blurred early morning space for answers to questions I hadn't yet asked, didn't know how to...didn't want to... I made a trip to the front door for the paper, looked in on Billy, still asleep, heard Joan dressing in the bedroom.

We met in the kitchen and kissed; then sat sipping coffee, smoking and staring across the table at each other. She stood after a while and spoke about getting to work, but not moving, her big eyes looking lovingly into mine until I looked away. She crossed and took my arm, bent and brushed my forehead with her lips. We kissed. I pushed up from my chair to embrace her, listening in fascination to our doubled breathing, hearts beating. We clung tighter, kiss-

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ing again and again until,pausing for breath,her face turned up eyes asking will you be all right. I nod and push her gently away, hating myself, wanting to get on with it, telling her not to worry. She walked to the door, lingered, smiled back at me. "Call me?" she asked.

"Sure," I said.

"About eleven?"

"Right on time."

"Be careful," she whispered.

"I promise," I smiled, walking to the door and bending to kiss her lips. She clung to me, tight. I remember wondering at her strength and the physics of the vibrations in her body; then she pulled away and backed out the door, running down the path and into the lane, calling over her shoulder, "See you about five."

I stood in the doorway, watching. "Have a good day." I called. She turned and blew me a kiss before tripsing up the lane and disappearing behind the neighbour's garage. I stood in the doorway, staring at the yard, not seeing it, until... I heard a groan from the front room, "Jesus-s- Christ ..., " some mumbling; a loud hocking, the window being raised, and -- flo-o-osh, what sounded like a juicy green one flying out onto the front lawn. Another groan, a series of thumps and then what sounds like three drunken drill sergeants pounding down the hall. "Hey! Anyone awake?" called Billy.

"Yeah," I called, letting the door swing shut as I turned, "in the kitchen."

He padded in blinking and flexing his lips. "Jesus, I feel like the whole U. S. Army washed its dirty socks in my mouth."

"Want some coffee?" I asked.

He shook his head, paced up and down massaging his throat;then stopped in mid-kitchen. "You got any beer left?"

I raised my eyebrows. "Mebbe you should try eating something."

He nodded. "After. Right now I need that beer to clear my head."

I fished out and opened a beer; gave it to him. He gurgled it half down in a gulp. "Ah-h," he sighed, "that's better already. Where the hell are we anyway?"

"About two blocks from the forum."

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"That tells me everything," He sucked sarcastically, "but where's uptown and downtown: and, more important, is the bus station anywheres around here?"

"Not too far," I told him.

He paced the kitchen, looking around, touching things. "Listen!" he stopped, "mebbe I will eat something, Peter. What've you got?"

I waved him toward the fridge. "Help yourself."

He shook his head. "Any eggs?"

"Sure; I think so."

"Okay," he said, "I'll have some eggs."

"Go ahead," I said.

Billy stared at the fridge, fingered his bottom lip. "Uh-hm, make them soft-boiled, I guess; they're easier to get down."

I got the eggs and put them in water,turned and watched Billy, hands trembling, trying to cut the bread. He hacked off a thick lopsided chunk and handed it to me. "Shit, look at me; I'm a fucking mess..."

I put the bread in the toaster. Billy got his jacket from the dining room, fished a mickey of Newfie Screech from the pocket. He lifted it to his lips, tilted his head back and drained the bottle; then gasped and shuddered. "Christ--t-t! That stuff's rough!"

I buttered his toast, took out his eggs, gave him a spoon, showed him the salt and pepper. He carried them into the front room. I paced the hall, prowled the kitchen, dining room,bedroom, picking up stray things, searching for any little thing to do.

Billy carried his dishes into the kitchen and washed them. He walked into the front room, returned to the kitchen, retraced this path several times, hardly seeming to notice me when we passed. Then I made several rounds without seeing him. I went into the front room. He was sitting in the chair furthest from the window, staring out, across the road and down the deserted lane. I walked to the window, stared out.

"What should I do?" asked Billy.

I turned from the window and paced tightly back and forth, trying to think. "I don't know Billy," I said, "I mean, I don't really know the whole story." I sat down on

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the couch, lit a smoke.

He stood, pursing his lips and jamming his hands into his pockets, shoulders slouched forward and chin on chest. He swaggered to the window. "It's simple," he drawled, "I absconded my parole. If they grab me now they'll fire me back in the pen." He swaggered back to the chair and sat. -

"Maybe not," I said, pushing up from the couch and pacing,"maybe your p.o. doesn't know you're gone. If he doesn't know, he can't issue a warrant; in which case Billy, you're okay as long as you get back before he finds out..."

"No fucken way. Man, he knows all right, and you can bet your sweet ass he'll have a flyer out on me."

"He'll get a report from the fucken Opp!" screamed Billy.

"Jesus Billy, how'll they know?"

"Because they nabbed me, yesterday, for drunk driving. They got my car and my fucken license."

I collapsed onto the couch. "Why in the name of fuck didn't you tell me before?"

"Whaddya mean? I didn't have a chance... Anyway, what difference does it make?"

He was right. "Where did this happen?" I asked.

"Somewhere, between here and ... No ... it was between Kingston and Ottawa, on the highway."

"How'd you get here if they pinched you?"

"Well-l, drawled Billy, "that's a funny story."

"I bet."

"No shit, it's really funny... Listen. I was pissed to the eyeballs ... drivin' all over the fucken road, to Ottawa -- I don't know why, 'cause I don't even know no one there. Anyway they screech up alongside and pull me over. They drag me outta the car, and I'm so plastered I can't walk, talk, or even see what the guy looks like. The copper says to me, "Mister, you're in bad shape," and I say to myself, man, you ain't just whistlin' Dixie, but I'm thinkin' all the time that I gotta pull myself together and try to bullshit him, y'know. Well, he says there's no way I can drive the car, so he puts me in the cruiser and tells his partner to drive my car to the station.

"I figure the game's up for good, y'know; they're gonna nail me for the driving charge, and then the jerk-off p.p.'s

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gonna send me back to the pen for drivin' the car and leaving Kingston without his permission,y'know, so I gotta think of somethin' pretty fast. He takes me into a little office at the station, and asks me my name and all that crap. Then he asks me where I'm goin', where I'm comin' from.

"I figure this is as good an openin' as any,so-o I tell him I'm comin' from Kingston where I just had a conference with the Prison Wardens about prisoner rehabilitation, and that now I'm on my way to Ottawa to report my findings to the Solicitor General and senior members of the Justice Department...

"Anyway, it turns out this copper's interested in all that propaganda. He tells me he's takin' a course in criminology from some university, so I bullshit him along, tell him about three-day passes, trade-training for prisoners, drug clinics, half-way houses, more psychiatric help and all that shit that people like to believe, and he's buying it all.

"Y'know I figured out then that copper's must have more guilt or sympathy or ... somethin' that makes them want to believe, even though they know different, that jails aren't such bad places...

"Anyway, now I'm ready to make my pitch, so I say to this copper that it's rather unfortunate I'll have to miss my conference. I shake my head, close my eyes, tell him I haven't had any sleep in the past few days and that I guess the few beers I had with dinner just knocked the shit outta me. I got him shakin' his head now, y'know, so for a clincher I ask him if I can call Warden Smith in Kingston. He passes me the phone and gives me the nod, so I call my friend, y'know ... 'Hello," I say, 'Warden Smith?' My friend starts to say sorry wrong number so I jump in fast, 'Yes,' I say, 'this is Bill. Sorry to bother you Warden, but I've met with some difficulty and won't be able to make tomorrow's conference. I wonder if you'd call John for me and ask him to adjourn for a day. You'll do that? Yes, thank you. No, no, nothing serious ... I hope. Driving violation. No, I'll be all right. Thanks again David,' I says and hang up.

"This copper's thinkin' now, y'know. He says after a while, 'You know sir, I don't see any reason for you to miss that conference. I mean, I'm sure that you were fatigued,

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and...umm, we haven't taken a breathalizer...and...well sir, you haven't done any damage. Mind you I couldn't let you drive, but I could put you on a bus...'

" 'Well," I say, 'that's very decent of you officer. I'll certainly not forget this, no sir. What is your name by the way?' He tells me Joe something and I write it down. Threw it away on the bus.

"Anyway, he checks the bus times, put me in a cruiser and drives me up the highway. He puts on his siren and pulls a bus over. I remember I haven't got any fucking money, so I say to the copper that I'm very embarrassed, but could he loan me five. Well good jolly Jesus Peter, he couldn't whip his wallet out fast enough. 'Certainly sir,' he says, passing me a fin."

"No shit!" I said, half-believing that it was a barrel full.

"No shit. What's even more, he walks me to the bus and tells the driver that it's very important I get to Ottawa because I'm an official with the Justice Department on very important business, so I pay my fare and scramble down the aisle, everyone staring at me, whispering, 'Top Secret,' and 'Very important.'

"I got into Ottawa this morning found my way to the highway here and thumbed a ride. That's it. Here I am."

"All that doesn't help you any," I said.

"Listen, all I could think about was getting out of there. I mean, at least this way I've got a chance."

And so, we talked through the morning, Billy asking me what he should do, me saying I didn't know. Joan phoned about eleven and spoke about her work and friends. I hung on the line with a bunch of "yeah's", trying to think of a solution to Billy's problem. Joan asked about him, finally, and I told her we were talking. She asked if he was going back to Kingston, and I said that, unfortunately, it didn't look very favourable, and then ... I thought, goddam, but it was only natural for someone in Billy's circumstances to blow up and run away to try and find something, anything, to replace the walled-in nothing that came as a gift from the Parole Board together with his Parole Papers. I thought, elatedly, that it was so elementary that everyone in the world should understand it without even being told, espe-

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cially the parole officer whom, in my enthusiasm, I had forgotten to think of as a typical bureaucrat savouring caution and sticking pins into others to protect his own precarious position on the office swivel chair. I guess Joan sensed I wasn't really with her. She lipped a kiss and whispered she'd see me later.

I returned to Billy and told him I thought we might convince his parole officer that he had really done nothing terribly wrong. He was skeptical, asked me to phone his friends in Kingston. I did. It turned out they had spoken to the parole officer,and the parole officer wanted to speak to Billy. He hadn't issued a warrant, and Billy's friends were willing to escort Billy to the Parole Office if he returned. They were familiar with Billy's problems and felt that what he had done was not a heinous crime, that it was, in fact, forgiveable under the circumstances. They knew of the awkward relationship between Billy and his parole officer and felt strongly that the parole officer should have offered Billy some material and moral assistance. Instead the officer had allowed Billy to be released from the zoo back into the jungle without even attempting to help him find food, shelter, or work.

These friends felt there was an excellent chance that Billy's parole would be continued if he returned to Kingston. They intended confronting the parole officer for his shirking of responsibility, to publicize the injustice of "The Case of Billy Miller, and write formal complaints to the National Parole Board Headquarters in Ottawa. But first Billy had to go back.

I offered to accompany him.

"Are you sick?" he raved. "How do I know it isn't a trap? And even if it isn't, there's still only a chance... a slim fucken chance that that chicken-pocked weasel bastard parole officer won't slide a banana peel under my feet and scoot me back to the birdshit cellblock, jerking himself off under the desk while he signed my committal papers. Jesus, I can't do another eighteen months."

I paced between him and the window, spitting out thoughts. "What are the alternatives? If you run in Canada, you know they're gonna get you sooner or later; then you're gonna do that eighteen,right? And if you run to the States,

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the same. If they don't grab you at the border, they get you someday. So you still wind up doin' that eighteen, maybe after a deuce for illegal entry. You can't hideout forever. Someone's gonna spot you; you're gonna make a mistake sooner or later. You can't steal, cause it's too risky, and you can't work or they'll trace you through your job. But if you go back now...at least there's a chance. I mean, it's fifty-fifty, maybe even better. You really haven't committed any crime, you got friends goin' for you... Shit Billy, I'm not tellin' you what to do...I'm just tellin' you to think about it... I mean, shit, how can you go on running...?"

"You don't understand! If I go back, I wind up right smack in the middle of that whole fucking mess again. You understand? I got the same shit to deal with? I'm an ex-con in a prison town, a parolee who can't even talk to his parole officer; a guy with a cock and two balls, good eyes and ears, even a body, and I can't get a job or even a lay. Ah, what the fuck!...

"You know all about this stuff; what would you do?" he asked.

"Me? I don't know. It's the first time in my life I'm not in jail or on the run. As long as there was a chance, I'd probably go back."

"You don't understand!!" he screamed, "I can't go back. I know-w! That little prick'll hang me."

"Do what you think; I can't tell you. All I can say is this: I've been on the run a lot. I don't know if I could do it again..."

Billy opened the window and spat out. "Okay, tell me what they said on the phone."

I told him.

"Tell me what fuckface said. The exact words."

We went over it again. And again. And again. At three Billy had his second beer; his third at three-ten. He kept asking me what he should do and I kept telling him he had to decide. At three-thirty another beer.

I left Billy pulling on his beer in the front room and went to the kitchen where I began cutting up vegetables for a stew. In a few minutes he joined me; then followed me round the kitchen, repeating his alternatives and the various chances he calculated each of them to hold. His mind

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was stalled,shying away from a decision. I knew how he felt -- afraid to go backward, afraid to go forward; not wanting to leave things behind nor miss things ahead, so he, I, you, everyone, at one time or another, stand still, wait, hope, pray for a magical solution -- like pebbles in a dry riverbed waiting for wind or rain or a tiny child's foot to steer them one way, or another.

I bent to my work, half-listening.

He grabbed my arm. "Tell me! What should I do?"

I returned his dilated stare until he looked away and wilted, slouching, heepish. "I can't Billy. I'm sorry."

He leaned against the doorjamb. "Fuck you then," he spat, "a fine fucking friend you turned out to be!"

I continued cutting some carrots. He kicked the wall and then scuffled kind of rubbery toward the front room. I tossed the cut carrots into the pot,opened a beer and joined Billy. He looked up as I entered, smiled a grudging, you-know-I-didn't-mean-it apology,sucked at his beer and cleared his throat. "Can you lend me bus fare?" he asked the floor.

"Sure," I said, "how much?"

"Twenty...at least...whatever you can spare."

He pocketed the thirty I gave him,nodded his thanks and left the room,returning shortly doing up his fly and holding a fresh beer. We sat quietly avoiding each other's eyes, recounting a few jailhouse tales, mostly lies. An hour, maybe more.

Then I heard the back door and footsteps in the hall. "Hi-i!" called Joan, a second before appearing in the doorway where she paused; then crossed, bent and kissed me. She smiled to Billy, went out to hang her shawl and get a beer. Back in the living room she stood in mid-floor with a little girl's questioning glance searching first my face then Billy's. "Are you talking?" she asked.

Billy and I exchanged glances. He shook his head. "No," he said, "We're finished."

Brief, soft, drawled out -- that statement shook me. I took a long pull on my beer and stared out the window at the sky above the synagogue across the street. I felt like there was a million children's rubber balls bouncing inside me. I wanted to laugh, cry, jump up, scream, get drunk, go mad. I wanted to celebrate Billy's new-found certainty. I glanced

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at him. He was no longer weak and flabby. For all he'd drunk, he was sober, and I could feel that he was strong in the sense that people find strength in direct and very difficult confrontation. Billy had decided. It didn't matter what. Either alternative would be difficult, precarious, perhaps painful.

"Oh," said Joan, "that's nice. Are you going back to Kingston?"

Billy glanced at me, sighed. "Yeah, I guess that's all I can do."

I left them talking, went to the kitchen to taste the stew. I heard bits of words and phrases from the front room: "Kingston ... not so bad...going back...chance...Kingston... friends...at least..." I set the table and called them to dinner. Billy ate two plates and said it beat jailhouse garbage. Joan declared it delicious, and I said I thought it was a little off somehow. Billy said that was probably because I put green pepper in, and that started him on a story about his first trip to Kingston Pen when he was put to work as a pot cook...

We left the dishes and went to the front room, smoked and talked about food and drink and bad days behind bars, good days with friends, David and Nancy, Jimmy and Gene. Billy asked the time;then, almost shyly, asked if we'd drive him to the bus station.

We agreed to and Billy paced the front room like a newly caged bear while Joan and I hunted for keys,shoes, and that something you haven't but always feel you've forgotten.

We drove down Dorchester, lamenting the destruction of the large stone houses that stood once like proud sentinels saluting across the wide boulevard, but had now been reduced to the role of beggars' rooming houses. Billy said sometimes old things had to go for the chop, said it was all a matter of doing it the right way.

I got out at the bus station, held the seat while Billy got out. It was cold. We stood facing each other rubbing our hands, neither of us knowing what to say. He stuck out a hand. I took it. He turned, started away. I caught him by the arm. "Want me to come in with you?"

"No..." he said, "thanks."

"Well Billy..."

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Jamming his hands into his pockets, he grinned and walked into the wind, the streetlights and shadows playing on him so that he looked like projected figure in army camouflage fatigues. He darted sideways and disappeared into the terminal.

Joan drove back along de Maisonneuve. "He's a nice man," she said, "I hope they don't send him back to Jail."

They didn't; far as I know, haven't yet. A week later I received a collect call from someone in some small town somewhere south of the border. "You know who I am?" I recognized Billy's voice.

"Sure," I said.

"Good. I just wanted to tell you: Billy Miller is dead."

I hung on the phone, the coded message whirling in my brain, paralyzing...the image, so apt, of burying an old unwanted life. I felt urgently ambivalent. I was, for this one precious moment, living inside both lives, watching in my mind's eye this epic symbol destroying clusters of haunting images...sad,simple, clear, dark...everchanging seasons, places, things ... the rubbery walk of the Billy Miller I hardly knew...

Long dark prison corridors...

No more. A click; a buzzing in my ear.

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NO MORE ENDINGS

You did not even leave me.
a faint shift in things,
a crack which widened freely
and there was no more us.
Not that I miss you and want you back,
just that it all lacks a sense of finality.
"There are no endings any more."
I jump to say. Then I remember
that when my mother died
there was nothing but a telegram
before breakfast to mark it.
Yet I seem to recall endings once;
Ah yes, in stories read me
as a child.
But that was long ago.
I live my stories now,
but it is not in my power
to give them endings.

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IN THE CITIES OF TOMORROW

Walls,
cliff-hanging walls:
In the cities of tomorrow
we shall walk in gloomy chasms
dwarfed by the architect's dream canyon.

Breaks,
life-leasing breaks,
green in concrete bowls
and the occasional cathedral
surrounded by its lawns of the broken.

Broken and walled in,
we will begin to cherish
the cactus on our window sill.
Will worry lest it perish.
One brief ray of sun
per day, inching through the cleft
in the glazed buttes
which jut up right and left,
might not be enough to make it tick.
The trick will be to turn
our sun lamp on it for an hour
while we shower. We will learn.

Walls,
curtain walls,
will hang the mind about,
driving it to shrink back
from any knowledge of its boundlessness.

Brakes,
hydraulic, harsh,
will act upon our dreams.
Who will be the rubber that shrieks off
and lies - black streak - upon the clean grey street?

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JOHN McAULEY

('old kingdom short wave')

YOUR ROVER REPORTS...

to take a grain
from one desert

is the beginning
of another

according
to the laws of subtraction

crossing all this sand i meet the expanse
of the universe in each footstep &

you become an egg
broken open before me

easy over

frying in the sun

if

this universe was all fire
you & i would be insane

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('old kingdom short wave')

TRAFFIC SITUATION...

the sailors that come from the great sea
have been stoned by the sphinx

on the ever shore

the waves roll under the sand &
motion generates matter

watching the waves matters
from the shore

canopus, it appears
disappears with the morning dew

a stone placed upon another
is already eclipsed by order

a kind of appropriate motion
diagonally across the ramp

eyes right &
the nation rises
to attention

ra's smile gives
us colour
look at the nubian

there is music on the radio
that heliopolitan sound can be heard
passed thebes

all the way to memphis

green signs along this expressway

MEROE NEXT 3- EXITS

& just beyond

USE HIGH BEAMS AT NIGHT

6TH CATARACT AHEAD

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('THE GREEK POEMS')

9

epicurus where are you tonight?

wine it up & warble
because tomorrow
we could end squared &

converted for more than a touchdown

that happy exploding old greek
died with his tongue
in a slave girl's navel

the mushroom clouds will catch
us belly up

chinese bombs are dirty
as the yellow river &
made of rice paper

fireworks to light the sky &
fry us like chicken
in a wok

then almond cookies

to be there
with a head

high among the paddies
huddling with dragons

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20

constantine

you took the royal jet to rome
with your crown & danish cheese cake

when papadopoulos threw you out

maybe you should have taken a slow boat
to china across the mediterranean as blue
as the proclamations of the new greek dictatorship

but papa's boys are electrifying all the islands &
in every general store
a t.v. set gathers dust &
is forever marked 'sale'

while you inconstant king splash
thru high italian social circles

did you take the treasury?

(was it hidden in your consort's lacy bra
in the name of constitutional monarchy?)

don't get me wrong

that same electric current is applied
liberally to the testicles of students
in athens jails while the amerikkan 6th fleet
rides peacefully a stone's throw away
in piraeus harbour to protect the freedom of the seas

that slow boat to china would have been docked by now

in shanghai where confucius is read again
with mao's blessing

no man is an island

even if he makes waves
your royal majesty

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ANNE McLEAN

SOME HISTORIES: LOST THINGS

1.

does there exist within us
or small groups of us
an interior design
uniting our fate

like a signature
through our minds or palms
according to which
friendships
are marked down ahead of
time

is there something in the passing
of random objects - a series
like a song played slow and distorted

is there some displacement of
hearing, sight,
will our tongues be given back
and are heroes here, only
awaiting a fitting deed.

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SOME HISTORIES: LOST THINGS

11.

watching how you turn

from one to another

between my hands.

corners in your face

relax to ovals.

I can slip in

through your eyes when you

smile/

our two halves together

motion silently like some

slow mantis flexing

hard new wings

maybe in the country they smiled like that
the morning I came into the world.
maybe people looked down from dirigibles
and dropped chrysanthemums
around my parents' cabin door.

you were too young when it happened
you lived far away.
you just went back to sleep.
perhaps you didn't even turn over.

but all through the country that day
it rained intermittently.

and the people who looked down
decoded old arrangements from the patterns
printed like maps on our skin:
sinking islands, great love
or great deception,
a history abruptly cut off . . .

when your mother found the chrysanthemums
out on the lawn that afternoon
she did not think of dirigibles.
they were a bit wilted,
she did not realize they were for you.

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SOME HISTORIES: LOST THINGS

111. he rambles as the animals in the gatineau mountains (some say hills)

he rambles as the animals
in the gatineau mountains (some say hills).
he has a woman with him,
she tends his wounds,
wraps cloth around his head.

she chews chunks of grey deermoss,
sucks the sourness out,
passes these to her child.
the child, who is too young to walk,
and must be carried, produces
saliva and diarrhoea.

he has with him a small drum,
a knife, a pair of shoes.
she has her needles, for sewing.
they carry coloured paint, in case
they encounter a barn.
barns in the gatineaus
are starmarked with their runes.

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PLANT LIFE IN HARD TIMES, EPILOGUE

after your disappearance
I came to tend plants

I came to
loneliness
and metabolic slowmotion

only unspeaking
lifeforms
were satisfactory

involuntary movements
(growth
circulation)
occupied me

I came to think
standing
in nighttime

seeings
hearings
in actual or echoform

recreating
your departure
until

in your not-being-here
you became another presence
which I incorporated

like a stem surrounds
a pebble
or a tree
engulfs spirits from dead matter
so.

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AND THESE LONELY BAD NEUTRONS FOR THE TRUE MONA LISA
THESE LONELY BAD NEUTRONS FOR THE TRUE MONA LISA
LONELY BAD NEUTRONS FOR THE TRUE MONA LISA
BAD NEUTRONS FOR THE TRUE MONA LISA
NEUTRONS FOR THE TRUE MONA LISA
FOR THE TRUE MONA LISA
THE TRUE MONA LISA
TRUE MONA LISA
MONA LISA
MONA LISA
MQNA LISA
*FAREWELL
*FAREWELL
*FAREWELL

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THE MALLARDVILLE CHRONICLES

(1)

here in mallardville
and surrounding vicinity
we are very complete.
we have our farm implements.
we have our customs
and our pentecostal church
and our united church
and not far from here
(as if that werent enough)
there is a presbyterian church.
we have our bean suppers
and the children have car accidents
on highway seventeen to arnprior.
we have cemeteries too.
there is plenty of stone
in these parts
owing to the existence
of the precambrian shield
and its presence throughout our district.

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(11)

we have observed that everything

contains the seeds of its own destruction,

and in our county

(county renfrew)

this is certainly true.

every person creates his own predator.

one by one, in our minds

these take shape

until a clear picture assembles

of the throats down which we disappear.

(111)

sometimes stories reach us.

in the north

we have heard that the dead

are buried in the river

under ice,

where their faces become

astrolabes

and the inhabitants tell directions

by the tilt of the eyes.

arcmtl 2024

(IV)

someone, nearby

has made up a song -

not about wolverines

or the antler men:

(song)

what if a motorboat
leaving the shore
came too close and mangled
our frozen yellow feet
while we were swimming
in the cold cold river?

would the sturgeon swim up
from his cave
under the island
built of submerged logs
and lick our stumps?

the same old sturgeon
who sucked the drowned bones
of our great grand forefathers
who came up with the loyalists
in 1810

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(V)

at night

from our porches

we shout and cause echoes.

occasionally above the weed field

up in the atmosphere

behind the house

a meteorite

doesnt quite

hit the ground

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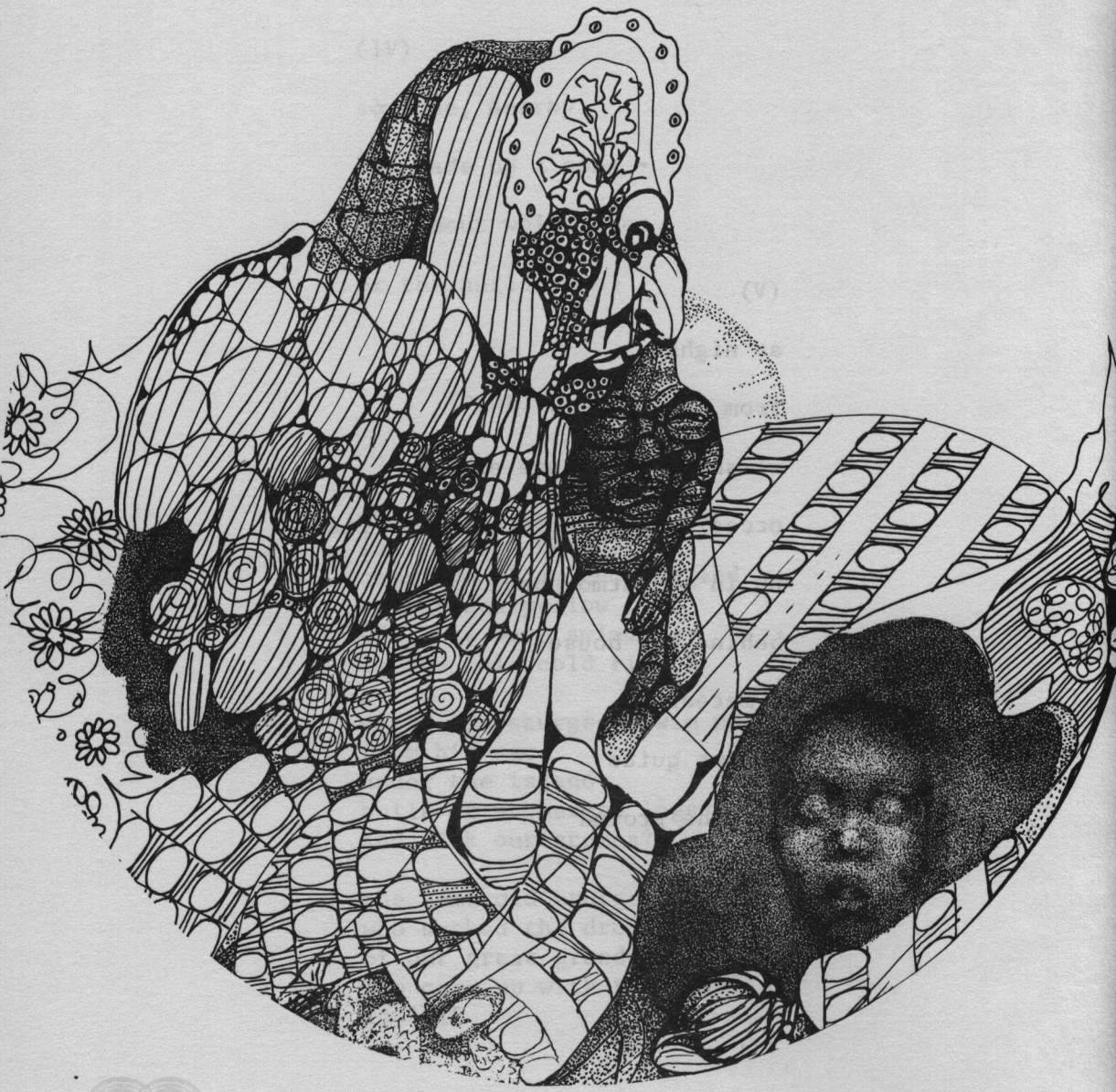

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ROBERT MORRISON

Imagine:
a clear night
a full moon
crisp stars,
you lean against a pine tree
and overlook a still lake.

Pluck one pine needle
and place it between your teeth.
Bite gently,
release a single drop of juice
release a single drop of saliva.
Roll your tongue to gather the mixture
the taste and texture
of your pine needle's scent.

Select one star.
Gaze at the crisp point,
closing your eyes
only when its after-image
floats on your eyelids,
Concentrate on the floating spot
and listen close
for the whispered chatter of your star.

The moon is but light.
Close your eyes and inhale.
Draw the light deep into your lungs
straining to hold it there.
Exhale gently -
blow the light across the lake.
You have created the moon's reflection
have spread it across the water.
Imagine.

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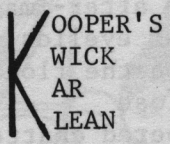
NEON NATIVITY

O america
mother of neon
seduced again
into another kilowatt climax
into another kilowatt child?

Glow on birthday candles
go on glowing in gas and glass,
O beaming brothers
O shining examples
electrify the youngster.
Hail, hail, the neon's here
a current sign of the times:



OPEN
LITE AND NITE

O AMERICA.
O mother.

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STEPHEN MORRISSEY

no birds in the sky
black as the trees
no thots
but the humming wind
black trees no birds
near morning
black the snow
the silence the sky
morning
black trees the wind in them
black no thots
as the sky
rising from the snow
the sun
the sky . . .
. . . as the wind in them
the sun behind the trees
in the sky no birds
no thot
but the wind
the silence
the sky
no thots
black trees
white sky
black trees
white snow no thots
but the mind the trees
the trees
but the mind
but the humming wind
the silence the sky

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whitefishblackfish

whitefishblackfish
whiteyeblackfish
blackackackackblackfish
whitefishwhiteyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeye
blackfisheyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeye
eyefisheyefisheyefisheyeyeyeyeye
ifishifishifishifishifish
whiteyeyeyeye
fiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii
eyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeye
yeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyey
eyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeye
iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii
iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii
iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii
bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb
bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb
bbbbbbbbbbbbbblack
whiteyefish
whitehitehitehitehitehitehitehite
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eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeewhiteeeeeeehitehitehite
whitehiteiteiteiteeeeeiteitehitehitewhitewhite
bbbbbbbbbbblack
lacklackackackckckcklackblackblack
fishfishishishishisisisishshshshhhhhshshfish
ishishisisshshshhhhhhhisisisisisisfishfishfish
whiteyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeye
tetetetetetetetetetetеyeyey yeyeye yeye
eyeyeyeyeyeyey
yeyeyeyeyeyey
whiteye hiteye he ye he ye
he ye he ye he ye he ye he ye he ye he ye
he ye he ye he ye he ye he ye he ye he ye
he ye ack ye he ack ye

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blackfish is ye he ye he ye
he ye he ye isis issis isis
eyeyeyeyeyeyeyey yeyeyeye
eyeyeyeyey
yeyeye
whitefishblackfish
he is sh
shshshshshshshshshshshshhhhhhssssssshshshshshshhhh
s s s s s s s
s s s s s
he ye he ye he ye
s s s s s s s
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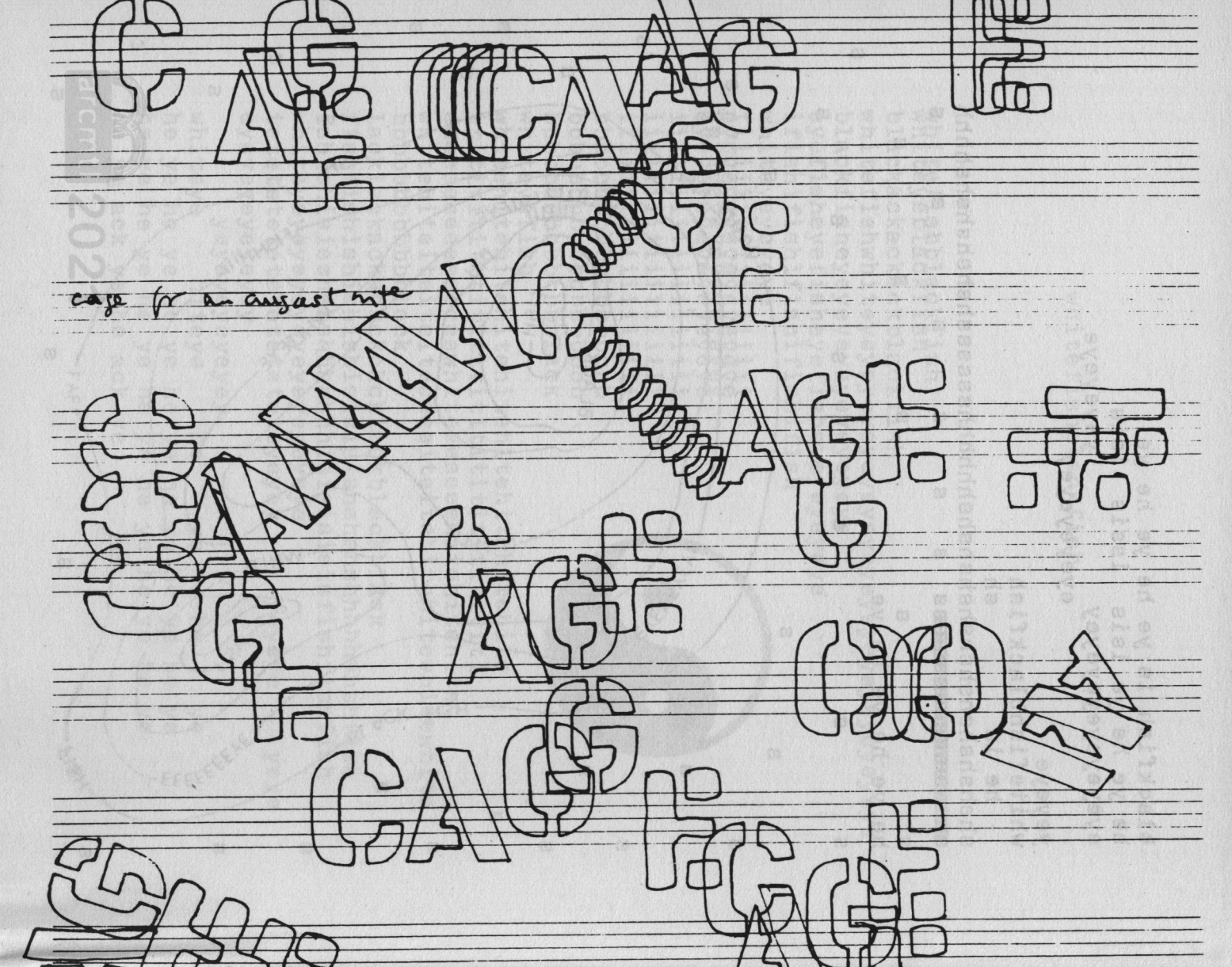
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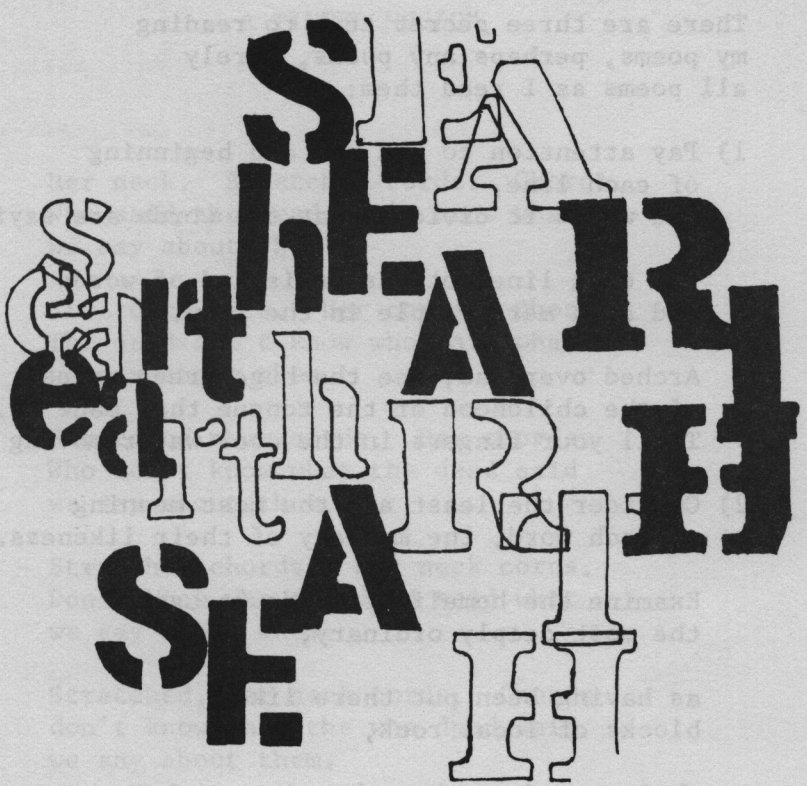

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RICHARD SOMMER

TEA IN A HOUSE UNDER TREES

There are three secret keys to reading
my poems, perhaps any poems, surely
all poems as I read them:

1) Pay attention to the end and beginning
of each line,
and where it divides what the words are saying.

See each line both as an island of words
and as a mere ripple in the flow.

Arched overhead, see the huge green trees
of the childhood of the tongue that made it.
Trail your fingers in the cool water moving past.

2) Consider the least and the most meaning
of each word, the mystery of their likeness.

Examine the homeliest words we use,
the most deeply ordinary,

as having been put there like
blocks of local rock,

cheaper and tougher than imported stone,
more true to the neighborhood.

Inhabit, briefly, the old house of the poem.
Sit in a porch chair and drink tea

as though you lived there,
or remember having lived there.

3) Consider Borges' line:
the "whereness of music."

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A TINTED MUSICK

Her neck. Stretched cords. Chords.
Who said the dead don't know what
we say about them?

Stretched neck. Her cords. Chords.
The dead don't know who said what
we say about them.

Stretched neck cords. Her chords.
Who don't know what the dead said
we say about them.

Stretched chords. Her neck cords.
Don't know who the dead said what
we say about them.

Stretched, her neck cords. Chords
don't know what the who dead said
we say about them.

Cords. Chords. Neck. Stretched. Her.
What don't know the dead said who.
We say about them.

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MORNING RAINBOW

1)

dark dark dark dark dark dark

dark dark dark dark lark dark dark

dark dark dark dark dark dark dark

dark dark dark dark dark dark dark

dark dark dark dark dark dark dark

2)

lark

dark dark

dark dark dark

dark dark dark dark dark

dark dark dark dark dark dark dark

3)

lark

lark

dark

dark dark dark

4)

ark ark ark

ark lark ark

ark ark

ark lark ark

ark ark

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THE SILENCE GAME

1) From three to ten may play.

2) Cards are shuffled and dealt face down, one to each player.
All cards are blank but one, which is marked IT.

3) Lights are turned off, plunging the room in darkness;
or, if the game is played in daylight,
players sit in a circle facing outward
so they cannot see each other's lips.

4) All players but the one who has received the IT card
begin to speak loudly, continuously, communicating
with no one in particular, and saying nothing
about the situation the game imposes on them.

5) IT remains silent.

6) The other players try to guess which of them is silent.

7) A wrong guess forces the speculator into silence,
and out of the game.
A correct guess ends the game.

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THE IGNORING GAME

1) From three to thirteen persons may play; from among their number they shall elect one, to serve as the Game Master.

2) The Game Master shall prepare one slip of paper for each player, on which shall be named one other player whom he or she must ignore.

3) These the Game Master shall distribute to their respective subjects in such a way as to conceal their contents from all others.

4) There are two objects in the game:
a) to discover who is ignoring you, and

5) b) to conceal the fact of your ignoring him or her from the player whom you are ignoring.

6) A mistaken accusation puts the player-accuser Out.
A rightful accusation puts the accused player Out.

7) The Game Master shall sell the paper of the Out to the highest bidder. Last ignorer in the game shall be declared Winner over a last accuser.

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THE DARKNESS GAME

1) Any number can play.

2) The game shall be played in a large house
from which all light has been excluded.

3) All players shall sit all day in meditation, motionless.

4) All players shall rise as the sun sets,
enter the house, and feel it.

5) The first object of the game
is to understand that no distinction lies
between the feel of the house
and any human flesh one may encounter.
To feel no difference in one's fingertips.

6) The second object is to understand that no distinction lies
between moving through a house in the daylight
and moving through houses at night.
To feel no difference in one's backbone.

7) There need be no winner and no points.
Or points may be rewarded to those who want them.

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MOON WALK

1) We walk seeing the moon, which is just past full.
We walk further, seeing the moon on far away branches.
We turn the corner, turning our backs on the moon.
We walk around the block, meeting the moon again.
We walk home, seeing the moon through leaves.
We walk in, leaving the moon just more than full.
Going to bed, we may or may not look for the moon.

2) An old Chinaman
flowers in a dark doorway,
back bent, question mark.

Bent old Chinaman
watches moon flower from doorways,
brittle question mark.

Bent old Chinaman
turns his moon-face to the moon,
flowering question.

China moon flowers
above shadows in doorways,
bent old question marks.

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HOMAGE

1)

Argentina, to me, is just another country,
but named for silver.

Borges, by now
you should know about countries.

The countries of vision in your mind
have their own currency among the homeless.

Are you anchored there, old blind man?
Are you too a householder among them,

deluded exiles who see only countries?
What have you seen from your window in Buenos Aires?

2)

Books write men.
Borges, master of stories so tall
they reach into many skies,

what is a silver country?
I want to know because you have lived there.
There you were written, there you have been alive.

3)

Your books, master,
come from there,
go nowhere.

Their dust jackets
are empty,
and open to place and time.

In them your face
is the moon of emptiness,
silver, intricate, wrinkled, blind.

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FINGERS

The fingers lying on my thigh
do not point, merely are,
in time, in space,
merely have unfolded,
having unfolded, curl up again,
to take a thick pen, to make,
mark, mar, move in space,
move time toward another
space, time, movement
in space, in time.

Whose are they? They are
not mine, not yours.
They will die, of course.
What have they done?
The fingers lying on a thigh
lie still in every tomb.
The nails grow in silence,
having grown long, stop growing,
start again, indicate
nothing but the thigh they lie on,
point nowhere.

If I could cry, perhaps I would.
Who would cry? Who would?
They are the flower of all our lives,
all lives, the lives of all hands
lying pointless on all thighs,
having, needing, making no point,
the thumbs opposing them,
the centuries trapped under denim,
the denim making no history,
needing none.

When they lift and move in air,
the air has always been under them.
When the cloth is left behind,
when it is plucked and held,
examined, disintegrates,
disintegrated years ago, wears
well, wears away, blue stone,
tells no story anyone's hand
could not tell.

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. . .

. . .

Has examined fabric, has held
cloth, skin, muscle, bone,
the air itself. Pulled triggers,
has pointed out innocent ones,
wraps around things to own them,
releases gestures to the air, gratis,
knows, knows nothing it has,
knows nothing it will not have,
nothing it will not have known before.
Knows nothing, points to nothing,
points where it points, points,
points to its own ends, the ends
of fingers, the gestures
rising invisible, infinite in numbers,
from the ends of the fingers, ends
of lives, ends of the earth,
the infinite gestures flocking at the ends
of the pale year, preparing,
for departure, for migration, for
anything, birds, momentary
and always, everywhere, cries,
meaningless, from the ends of fingers,
flight, from the ends of the fingers,
the stream, continual havoc,
the rest, the steep release,
the flight from a thigh in denim,
from the thigh, the meat, the bones
extended, mine, not mine, flight
from the ends of all fingers, birds.

Go where? Do? Point?
Infinite questions, all meaningless.

I point. No one points.
Gestures are gestures. Why?
When all fingers lift the rotted cloth,
make poems. I do not
make poems. No one makes poems.
Poems leave when you or I
relinquish them. While I hold them,
they are not yet poems, they are
fingers resting on, rising from, wrinkled
cloth, faded blue, lying on a thigh.

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APRIL

1) The birds have come back.
The buds scratch a new sky,
leaving marks only in the mind.

The mind bears them away,
into the rest of the year,
into the calendars of silence.

2) While you slept, I saw
the flock of blackbirds
come over the tops of the trees from the south,
land on three saplings,
a charged cloud of blackness,
energy.

You awoke, and spoke of your dream.
Blackbirds, a pulsing tree,
a swarm.

In my mind, or yours?

. . .

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. . .

3) I wouldn't call it love, exactly.
Watch horses released to a meadow,
running.
Watch how they turn each turn together.

4) I watch my body,
how it sticks out in places,
never far enough.

Never far enough to reach the others.
The body is spring-foolish,
it scratches itself against others,
knowing all the time
it is one of the others.
Fool! I am one of the others,
you are one of the others.
Each is one body, stub and stubble.
Each body shares the only mind.

5) Entering, we turn as one.
Where the tree ends, the sky starts
and fills with territorial cries.
We turn together as the hillside turns,
as spring enters me, as I enter you.

We have entered the turning itself.
It is entering the turning that turns us as one.

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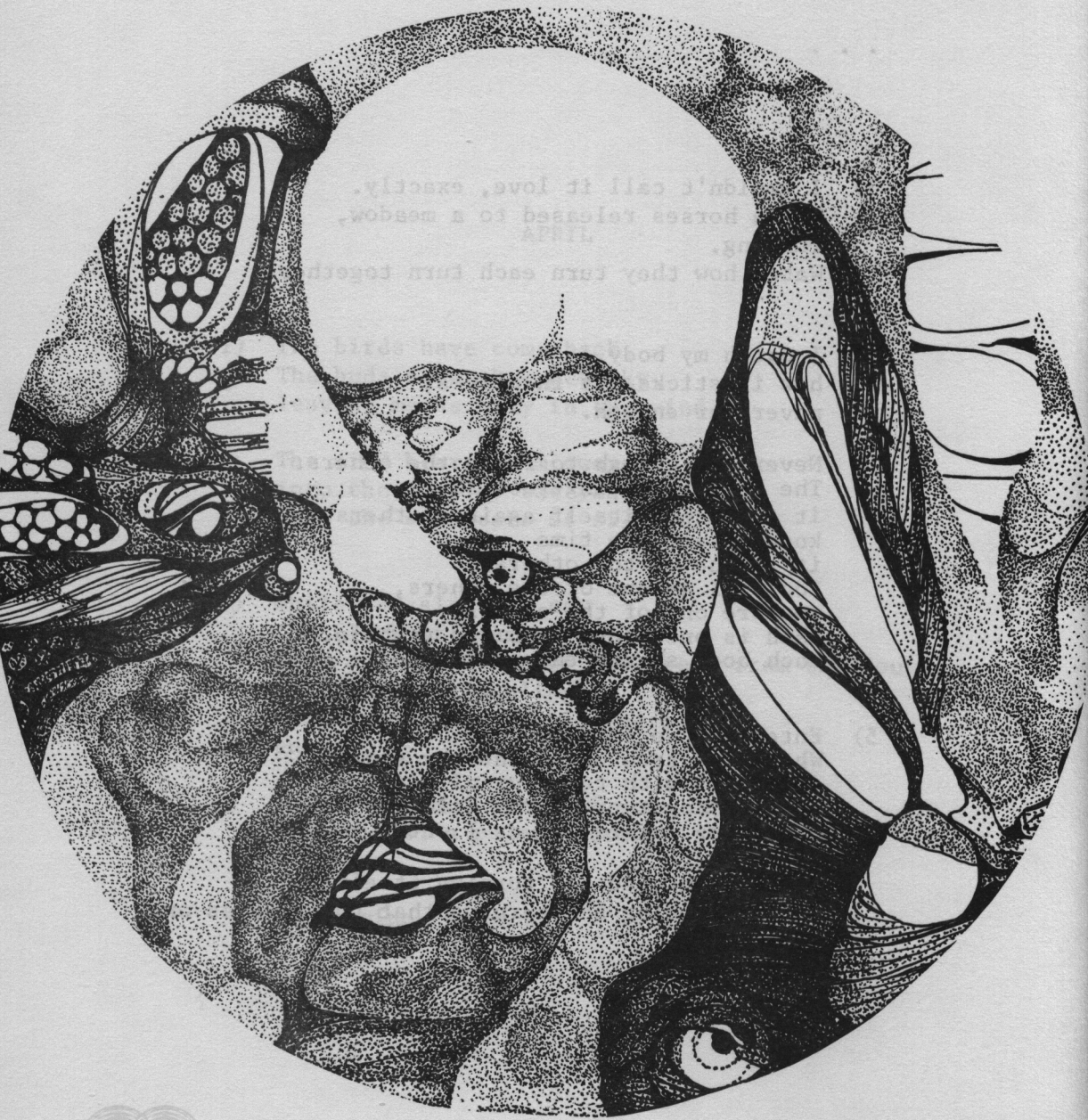

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JOY THWAITE

THE FIRST LOVE BORN

Walking down that william street, My Dear,
one adolescent morning
my first womanlove
blew frost puffs poufs of laughter
prophesied our grandchildren
rocking me lovingly in her tapered fingers.

Yet the swelling belly of you
this woman my wife
is lovely

In last night's dream Her face gathered before me
feature by feature
(soft focus/ f a d e / sharp)
her poor fingered body
(mine the first for her, hence the collapse, said the smiling white coat)
lay loose again on my soul.
Yet I awoke to knowing you in labour.

I look at this little red wrinkled Rapunzel rabbit
and realize it has been claimed.

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REFLECT

Sometimes the pattern slips
the Rim's in shadow.
False glints at moontime
eddy and suddenly leer.

A flour face sticks on the pane
caught in a crooked shadow.
My mirror is swimming
with memory of the fish foetus
the lolloping dollchild.

Now it reflects the concave belly
convulsed protectively gripping
a blue knitted baby

Mirror mirror
on the wall

who is the?
what was the?

Sometimes the pattern sticks
the mirrored belly
swells and flowers
leaf upon leaf
branching
in veins of beating blood.
Yet I stare at my mirror
and its blue room is empty.

Rock-a-bye
Rock-a-bye
Daddy's gone a-wenching
Before he never came

Someone dropped acid in
Prufrock's coffee
to relieve the boredom

All were present
at the violation of Snowhite
and the flourface
SLIPPED

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LADY MAIDEN

Cohen's nude
of the long white flesh
a wafer of pale light
nailed by her dark eyes in the mirror.

He comes from the sea.
The soft crystalline beard
breaks on her breast.
His line is bronze-faceted
and shot with light
to cloak her.

The shade slips on the tenement window.
Put out the light.

Her bronze heroic frescoe
veined and stained
to an odd shadow
High Up
in a corner of her mirror
like a spider.

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HE WILL NOT SING TO ME.
(But why won't the merman stay below waterlevel?)

10 a.m.
a cold congealing cup of tea
the spoon slung sideways lurchingly
the impotence of silver
in a muddy pool
his calling card
bedizened with a breath
of ash of cigarettes.

My dolly gentlemen
a never ending queue
bearing best brandy
and well-meaning beards
with steamy spectacles.

Why bother?
Is it to keep one's genitals in topping trim
or prove that they are there?
Is it a proof just of normality
mathematically equated
balanced on buttocks?

How many dolly gentlemen
will it take
Bob Dylan, Krishna, Christ
to blot the memory
of your lean and raving soul?

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ELAINE VININSKY

ROTATING DAISY

The tree outside my window is like a rotating daisy
It moves as do my thoughts
Wheels of time to guide me
Smooth, contoured realisms
A circle that provides warmth -
The lines on a tree stump that tell its age
A chain ... The seasons hold hands as they go around
Global village...a small world
It turns on its own axis. It requires no outside help

The rings on my fingers
The circles in my orange juice
The happy face...

arcmtl 2021

ELAINE VININSKY
REGINALD KENNEDY

MAKE ME

Make me a rhubarb pie
and sprinkle it with sugar.
Make me a pumpkin pie
and I'll show you how to live.
But after midnight your horse-driven carriage will be a pumpkin again.

The highwayman comes riding
up to the inn
and says "Will that be cash or chargex"

Times have changed.
I'll pay my bill in cash.

The innkeeper's maid always uses tide in her washing.
and the highwayman smokes colts.
Meanwhile, in the stable, a baby is being born...

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