

GREEN MUSIC

Martin Dworkin

In our salad days, we had a man
 Come in to play the syrinx while we danced.
 But that was long ago; now is a nation
 Of ungainly moments, citizens and instants,
 Graceless and equal to goodness, to evil.
 The music no longer measures us to greener things,
 Softer than savagery, yet savage things,
 Prowling where the cities are.
 The music no longer measures us.
 We hire a fiddle and some brass
 To blow and tinkle at dinner,
 Behind a golden arras,
 While waiters wipe our chins.
 Under the lichens, the minerals murmur greener serenades;
 We nod, tasting the last morsels
 Of the feast, sinking our fingers—
 We eat with our hands, but gently, genteelly—
 Into the liver of Prometheus.

NIGHT ON SKID ROW

Miriam Waddington

My blood shudders but I dream
 of a bad country overcome,
 of torn flags and murmuring
 in burnt-out cities; what is as cold
 as the anticlimax of return,
 the soldier with his missing limb?
 There aren't a dozen burning words
 to give or take or smoke in chains,

and hardly a curse to knock about
in the fogged arena of the brain.

The clever thief of forty-odd
wakes sober in the boiler room,
he feels his cancer sharp as God,
but doesn't think this is the time
to pen a *billet-doux* to Christ
(the lying poet's bleeding heart),
instead, he knots his shirt and goes
across the valley's bridge to find
the village where his father died.

And the Irish pickpocket
alias barker-out-of-work,
resumes his habit, *ave, evoe*,
the heroin is organized
with rich disaster in his veins;
stork-like he reels and teeters,
and blind with love he dreams
he's king of the rainbow carnival
and the city is his vassal.

Doris with her crooked bones
locked in a child's haunted world
is glad to be the scissors' wife,
to trim the thread from uniforms.
Her friend, a hotel chambermaid,
from eight to six on *Sherbrooke-strasse*
stumps the unemployment clerk
who reads her face and shakes his head:
she'll never shape into the work.

I met them all in their defeat;
their words, of narrow local colour,
fell in wider provinces
than their travels would allow.

A crowd of accents was dispersed
through all the shabby streets I know,
where night, erect with violence,
disgorged police from limousines;
I heard the whistle on the air
and hung; and splintered from the blow.