

Summer Rites

Light curdles behind the lilacs
heavy as grapes in September
from the day's heat.

The neighbourhood children
call to us
rolling
(a school of porpoises)
down freshly mown lawns.

We join a small group of people
dressed in light clothes
patterned with flowers or sea.

The group grows
couple by couple
until the whole room
rides the crest of a wave
wineflower in hand.

The music begins —
pleating and repleating
of sumptuous accordion folds
as we sing together
songs of our childhood
our adolescence

people who meet at parties
at Christmas for birthdays
teach one another's children
or extract their teeth
behind each an intricate landscape
a country of many roads
that the others can never know
though they name the landmarks
sing "Auprès de ma Blonde" "Galway Bay"
"Over the sea to Skye".

Along the window-ledge
philodendrons and ferns
strange faces of friends
sway in the candlelight

beyond — in the cool darkness
the children too link arms
in a reel under the lilacs —

they wave to us
from another shore.

— *Elizabeth Jones*