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Afternoon in Carolina

Alice Moser

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AFTERNOON IN CAROLINA

The boy on the bicycle mounts the tilted street,
 Gaining the shade, the hedge-rowed walk.
 Below the hill the small shops huddle,
 Reticent for all their obvious talk.

The heat now is sticky as a burr,
 Only the trees have pushed it out of place—
 Through which comes an aloof walker, a symbol:
 England in exile with a sharper face.

A dreamer sits, weighted with heat
 And noise of war (the practice planes
 Roaring over the leaves like rumor winds
 In Fall) immobile with imagined pains.

The dreamer patterns snares to catch his mind,
 Baffled with heat, tranced by the loud
 Bellies of planes, mocked by a giant dog
 Which sleeps like Nero, heavy-pawed and proud.

ATOP CHAPEL HILL

Like marching soldiers, pines descend the hill,
 Arrested by a brisk salute of air.
 The town beneath veiled by the smoking mill
 Seems made by distance something rare.

The new discoverers of a land explored
 Bring speculation to divine the scene:
 Built against chaos lies the desperate town . . .
 Cool in its anarchy, the unbridled green.

Saved from lost centuries this hill
 Teases the milling worlds. Yet here move on
 The unfathoming creatures under the still
 Surface, unmolested by the moon.