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Anger and Quiet

Babette Sassoon

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ANNIVERSARY

This is the anniversary of refusal,
The tracked zero of solemn talks,
And balked side-shows of old walks
Drill the unkept oath and tell
Yearly tribute to an undone maid.

I know she counts her years by no,
And walks the earth on stilts,
To lie straight and still under
Her bent back, seeing how her flesh
Has wrinkled many graves and her
Nails bear an ancient crest.

She heads her maiden night
With his mounting step by threes again;
And dreams the wagging finger's
Crescive fear will lead
Her helpless to a suffocating yes.

ANGER AND QUIET

Coward I called as he retreated
To my advance. My arms reached out
And his body arched back.
My legs kicked courage,
Wound about the bent knees
Of his limping breath, but his toes cramped.
The head and feet of touch
Crouched beneath the kitchen stairs.
I strode out as boldly as any woman
After her night of love, stepping in false
Delight, his hand below my step.
When I entered the garden from the kitchen stairs
He crawled housewards
And guarded the hearth with his solitude.
I returned, sensing him there,
Though the ardor of summer in my garden
Had broken my failing zeal.
I came softly as any girl with feeble hopes
And quickly his arms opened to my quiet
His soul to be nested by my calm
And, God, I called, as I homed
In the open furrow of that peace.

BABETTE SASSOON

CATWISE

Coming out from a movie,
take (improbably)
a tiger cat, asleep
on the hood of your car:
in anger name him a name,
or hug him in your wonder;
whether you play St. Francis
or tail him like Huck Finn
is, catwise, much the same.
But always his tiger eye
projects its opal icon
on some memorial screen:
a sequence from the preview
to which you are going,
the dumbshow out of which
(humanly) you have come.

PHILIP BOOTH