

1968

After Gilles' Requiem

Howard McCord

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Recommended Citation

McCord, Howard. "After Gilles' Requiem." *New Mexico Quarterly* 38, 4 (1968). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol38/iss4/13>

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HOWARD MCCORD

CONSUMMATION

It is somewhere else you go
 when your eyes slip past my face,
 sweep back inside and turn
 behind me into a corner
 I cannot reach with any mirror.

I know it is the secret place of paradise,
 cut from the world by the arched wall of the spine,
 its only language a heavy air pushed through the throat,
 its silences rapped out by ten convulsive fingers.

None of us allows the other entrance
 and you can never tell me how you live there
 or what your knowledge is
 of the god who warms himself inside us all
 or why he calls you by a different name.

HOWARD MCCORD

AFTER GILLES' REQUIEM

Pacing the length of an alley,
 one finger writing in the air,
 suffering quietly, when
 a screech owl crashed like a dead limb
 in front of me, ear tufts
 taut back like a cat's,
 crying, wailing, swirling in a maniac
 dance of pain, died.

The paradigm was mine,
 the labyrinthine architecture
 of collapse, the fall,
 the scream some lover's broken patience,
 knit and ended simply as a boy with a .22,
 aiming, firing,
 prophesying with his eye
 and one more curling finger
 willed death.