

silently through rooms reserved
for the dying. In the room of my
friend curtains are drawn, flowers
freshened; the long wait is nearly over.

I falter in the role thrust upon me,
appalled by the diminished frame,
the lack of flesh, the weariness etched
into the lovely face. Where is the husband
whose place is here? Sister says he can't
take any more, has gone on a bender.

What can a divorced unbeliever find
to cheer a friend's last moments?
"Coming over the bridge was wonderful,"
I tell her. "The panorama spread below
was like a Streeton painting: sun sparkled
rooftops, water gleamed like blue silk,
and over all was a glorious golden haze.
There's no toll now," I add, in truth,
"Nothing to pay any more."

JEAN THORNTON

HOW BIG A HOLE DOES A MAN REQUIRE?

He came to the beach,
a great wind-braking barrel of a man,
and immediately began to dig in the sand
with a bright red spade brought for the purpose

The hole assumed enormous size, wide and deep
as he dug with systematic thoroughness
round and round, round and round and round

He stopped within a metre of my towel,
threw aside his spade and squatted, Buddha-like
all afternoon, in brooding possession of his hole

Towards evening, two small children came and peered
over the edge of the hole and longingly asked if it
belonged to me. "No" I said, "It belongs to him."
They crept away, recognising the impassibility of power.

After they had gone, he took his spade
and filled the hole with speedy efficiency.
Then he too went away.

ROSANNE MUSU

THE MARQUIS

Wielding hammer he persists
Growing callouses on the undersides
Of his knuckles
 Building spiky shelves
Or bunks if you like
 Resting places for weary chin
To rest migrained heads
No cottonsoft pillows for me
Verily he makes me lie
On nailbeds doggedly malletted
Painstakingly hammered in neat rows
 of twenty
Neat diagonally true rows
 of twenty
I'm no fakir I cry
Lie there he gesticulates
With power wielding fist-held tool
And I submit.