

ANNE COOMBS

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER COUNTRY

Another year, another address book.
Another country, another "home".

You put all that behind you, or so you said,
and cast titles for the memories.
"Room Service" fits
but it's been taken;
"Somewhere Else" is where you've been,
where you're going.

The rootlessness is in the spirit, not the mind.

You said "it's all behind me",
you quit the transient life —
the transit lounges, the in-transit loves.
You stopped the wandering life
but made no attempt to build another.
You simply stopped

because you cannot change.
Your life is hotel rooms and lobby coffee shops;
empty spaces of nice design,
a life of passing faces in passing beds.
This is where you've been,
this is where you're going.

The rootlessness is in the spirit, not the mind.

And all the time an observer
but watching your own moves more closely than the rest.
Your people are pieces on a chessboard

and you, or course, a master player.
Wide-eyed at all the faces,
seeing nothing but your own.

London,
August 20, 1987.

PETER MURPHY

FOOTFALLS

Near the end of night or at early morning
when light rims curtains and doors
our older boy
moves through the house like a thief
tiptoeing intently through emptiness
shoving a tiny ball of sound
along the floorboards where it spins and bounces
till like a bookshelf it crashes through my dreams
and I stumble up, tottering, watching unobserved
as he scuttles back to a room with curtains drawn,
a mouse,
knowing what can happen if he wakes us up . . .
And I slip back through silence to a pillow
while light breaks in with early cries
and sputtering in the trees outside,
as he, boxed in an incandescent room,
over-exposed,
plays with toys
he's snatched
from dreams.