

9/20/68

Dear Lou,

Here is one of Martin McAuliffe's poems.

Perhaps Jim, who is pretty sensitive, will learn something of the man from it.

Hal

MARTIN McAULIFFE

THE GARDEN IN THE SKY

I

Every island is precarious and far,
And every star.
And flowering is just as perilous and rare
As lovers are.
Each letter and each light is late, and each flare,
And every shore.
The ocean's deep and dangerous and just as unsure
As any darkened door.

STEPPENWOLF ONE

II

All things are possible to the next turning of the stair,
 To a shadowy door—or a particularly dark stretch of street,
 “But even the little apples the wind blew down send back cider
 On the breeze. Surely if you wait long enough you *might*
 Be answered, the door *might* after all open? Something
 Might stir in the emptiness, a letter might come...or
 reinforcements?”

That space—that feeling—it grows so big with wanting
 To be *something*, if it could just find the word, the sense:
 Suddenly make itself solid, the way love does, becoming child.
 What’s true there is the yearning, the always trying
 To get across the vast silences, the failing, and the dying,—
 The cover closing on the book, the shutting of the doors,
 The scissors—

WHAT IS IT?

It is as speechless among us as a widow is
 Among lovers . . . Or it can only stammer at us
 The way a man who has lived a long time among corpses
 And knows which part will bloat and how much, and when . . .
 Stammers among children.
 Yet the stalk is never the same stalk for having had the flower.
 It’s never the same earth—It’s never the same ocean, ever,
 And even the darkness is different.

STEPPENWOLF ONE

MARTIN McAULIFFE

III

If an eternity is,
Then it is here now.
And part of us
Hangs into it now
As a flower plucked from a garden hangs
Into a vase.

For flowering is all.
But oh so long in between:
Years and years even
Before it becomes possible.
Remote islands, and no charts.
A bowl extended to the skies,
When the vastness starts
Inside, starts suddenly to rise . . .

I think it rises from the snow like melting.
The fragrance steams up from it like singing,
And then it blends
With the always-listening winds.

STEPPENWOLF ONE

MARTIN McAULIFFE

IV

Yes, this body shall rise up again
And when it does, why then,
Which will it be?
The child, the man, the corpse, or me?

Look:

Out of herself the mother knits a skin
For the falling child within.
Perhaps the shape a rising soul takes
Is the shape the lover makes.

STEPPENWOLF ONE

MARTIN McAULIFFE

V

The word of love is breathless and alone
Or has a flower's breath, a lily's silence.
Its going through the lips is slow, its pace
Is parting's pace: it lingers at the gate.

Yet it does, it does float up, as lovers
Up from a garden flow. Its influence
Walks in gentleness, and crushed gentleness
Tints the long air, and wild thyme or mint flows

On it. The word, the wind of love, it winds
Up from the orchard, up from the piney woods,
Up from the heart, full of its own fragrance,
Breathless and beautiful hugging incense.

STEPPENWOLF ONE

*"Wonder why they electrocute a man
 at the one o'clock hour at night?
 Wonder why they electrocute a man, baby,
 Lord, at the one o'clock hour at night?
 The current much stronger, people turn out
 all the light . . ."*

—Guitar Welch

Angola (Louisiana) Penitentiary, 1959

(from Samuel Charters' *The Poetry of the Blues*)

SAMUEL CHARTERS AND THE BLUES

by Fred Schoning

Blind Willie Johnson made records during the twenties, as did Robert Johnson (no relation) during the thirties. Since that time the music of each has been reissued on separate long playing records, but as neither is on any best seller list it is doubtful that many people, even those with an interest in folk music, know these men existed. Nor, for that matter, are many aware of the music of Bo Carter, J. D. Short, or Leroy Carr, and yet these men, along with Son House, Tampa Red, and countless forgotten others, have influenced, *permeated* virtually every facet of American music—for these men are the rural Negro blues singers.

A great deal has recently been written about American folk music, and along with this renewed interest has come the

STEPPENWOLF ONE