

Strutting and Fretting

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“Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi”

You were seventeen
when the explosion went off
when a plane went down
when you were transported
through “Cottonfields”
into a world you’d never known
walking in darkness
and then there was light.

Then you were nineteen
winter of 1960
the cruel rain and the wind
blowing in early.

Lyn Castner gave the okay.
Flo’s brother, you recall.
You used his turntable,
played one by one
his eighteen
double-sided
Woody Guthrie
78s.

Each time
the needle dropped
your head spun
the land parted
some heavy anchor plunged

into the waters of the harbor.
You felt more like yourself
than ever before.

Now you're eighty-one.
You've songed and danced
masked and anonymous.
You've slept down in the parlor
as Alias and Jack Frost.

How does it feel?

How does it feel?

You've been to the bottom
and followed the river,
saddled a big white goose,
imagined life as
one big prison yard,
stood over a grave,
and hurled seven
incinerating curses.

You've left your heart
in the Highlands
while drowning in the poison.

You nearly drowned
in Delacroix.

You've been hunted
like a crocodile.

You've taken in,

relived,
peeked on your knees at
and looked right through
lies, dreams,
forgetful hearts
and some kind of pain.

Over by the cypress tree
enroute to Parkland hospital
between the windows of the sea
you've heard sirens and mermaids
and hoot owls singing
above and near
revival tents, slave markets
and medical butcher's shops.

Their song has been
a fitting soundtrack
for Zapruder's film
for sixty long years,
years that someone called,
you remember,
the age of the anti-Christ.

Sir Christopher asked you,
"Read any good books lately?"
You were re-reading
Richard the Third.

Do you ever wonder
whether your pasts
have ever been?

And if they were,

what scenes you were truly
featured in?

Is life a walking shadow?
If we've been poor players,
where was our director
and who wrote our lines?

Who staged our scenes?

And who kept hidden
all that went unseen?

Did the needle just skip?

And where must you and I have been?