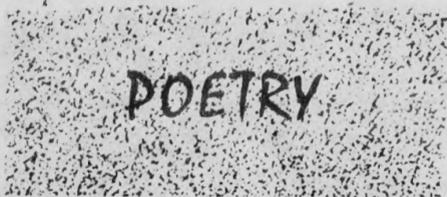


So close we can hear each other's thoughts,
 But not close enough to understand.
 So near we are touching,
 But not near enough to feel.
 Eyes penetrating into mine,
 But not deep enough to see.
 What should be warm
 Lacks warmth.

— Sheryl Wright

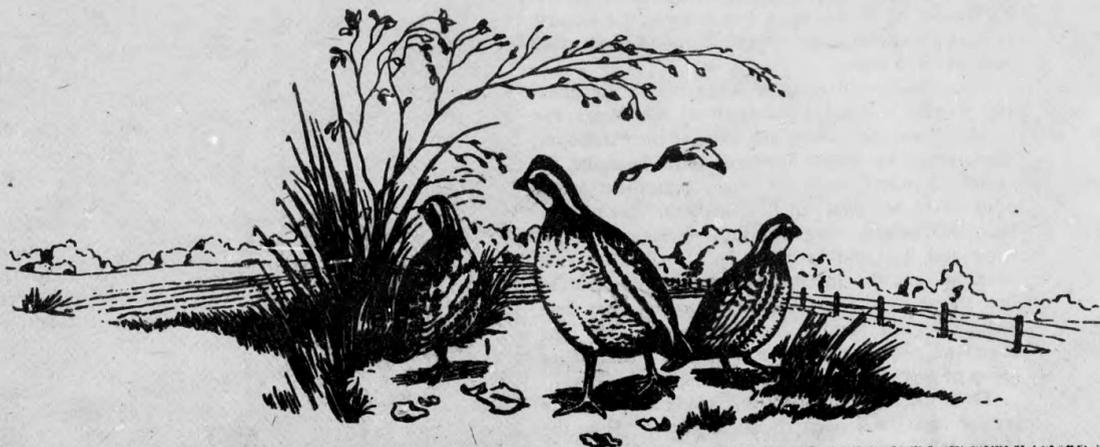


Walking

Walking.
 The gnarled brown tree roots rest
 Softly, in the green moss.
 Quiet, protected by the earth.

Strange how I have no roots
 My soul drifts restlessly from cloud to cloud
 Seeking - for what?
 Maybe reality.

— Shirley Mellish



SMALL VOICES

"Small voices, speak up!"
 said the giant --
 but small voices shrank.

The giant got up,
 and he bellowed
 and rambled:

"It's time you hollered,
 ranted and snapped --
 showed where you are!

Put some kick in your
 speech and some feet
 on your words!"

But the small voices
 huddled, smaller [
 than before.

"What makes you die
 out and think you can
 sit in the dark --

do you think you can
 run at the small
 of your voice?

Come on! Let's hear you
 sling it! I want to
 hear noise!

There's lots to make
 noise with: I know you
 can make it!"

But small voices
 were holding a
 conference.

— C.A.T.

Thoughts, After

Yeah, you did it again.
 Took that stuff. So
 A few hours of crazy patterns, time
 Slowed down so that you can almost
 Step outside your body and watch yourself;
 Then, speeded up so that everything seems
 Rushing past you at crazy angles, people
 Talking in blurbs, your head
 Swimming in a whirlpool of sensory
 Fragments. . . spinning so fast that
 You instinctively grip the arms of your chair, hoping
 That after this rush, you'll feel that gentle leveling, that
 Relieving awareness of morality restoring itself.

It levels.
 You can feel it. Almost
 Like gliding slowly down into the world,
 Back to familiar surroundings that were
 There all the time. . .but, different, somehow.
 You breath easier, talk a bit wearily, but
 In longer, more confident, sentences.
 You know what you're saying, now. You're
 Not sidetracked as easily. A flicking cigarette
 Doesn't distract you, now. That same flick that,
 An hour earlier, would have turned into
 A somersaulting ball of flame.
 Not now. You're levelling.
 Coming down.

You can feel it in your gut.
 That pain is sure, now (But, hell,
 Nothing's pure.) Maybe
 It's that pain, nagging, that makes you think.
 Your head is still a bit fuzzy, your bowels sore,
 Your eyes ache from the light filtering
 Through the windows. They're still a bit big.
 Sensitive. Your nerves jangle easily.
 And you think.

What happened:
 Nothing, really. But,
 A couple of times, you
 Nearly lost your mind, nearly got sucked into that
 whirlpool. But, you knew that
 Before you took it. Maybe
 That's what you're trying to think about. And
 What you might think about
 Next time.
 After.

— Thomas