#### **Everyone hates Asta**

At recess, when all the kids act tough around the playground pushing, playing tetherball and four square and tag Asta leans against the wall and watches

Then the bell rings and everyone runs to the classroom, giggling Asta comes in last and sits on a tack yelps, I'm glad it wasn't me

When Asta makes a mistake at the board and the teacher yells, and when Asta spills her milk or drops her lunch and when Asta cries we all laugh and chant: Asta's got the cooties! Asta's got the cooties! and we chase her home

Finally when Asta talks back and tells everyone she hates them and she swears at me and hits Susan back pushes sandy in the mud, and when the girls start to cry

and everyone yells FIGHT!! and Asta starts to run and Jimmy throws a stone and it hits her in the eve and she starts to cry and it bleeds, the bell rings and everyone points at Jimmy and the lunch teacher is yelling and the ambulance comes and when the principle asks WHY? nobody knows.

And when Asta's seat is empty and she's long forgotten everyone hates me

Paul O'Donnell

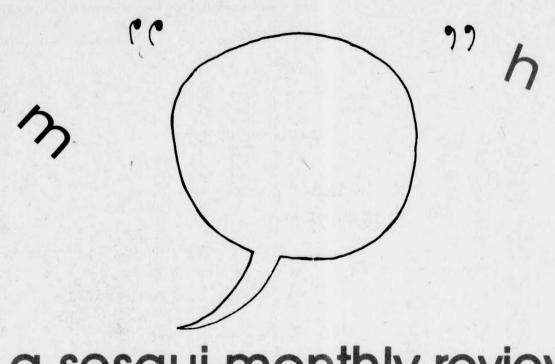
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### **JERUSALEM**

the stars in the blue black sky they blur around the stars of Orion's belt

the grave stones in the military cemetery



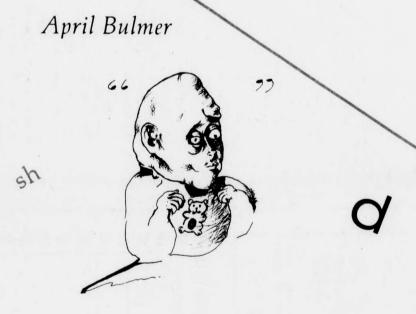
# a sesqui-monthly review

AB

1

sideways squished heart child's valentine or when you can't find the scissors

B, a damaged love shape always second best two chambered without a pulse muscle of (the) Broken and Blue



# children in the yard

children were sleeping when I went past, sleeping in the yard hands across their stomachs gently feeling their breathing hardly touching the air

C. Steadman

and when you have found her say the acolyte needs her to erect the monastry for his ministry

and you will find her tethered with the wool of innocence to the abandoned tree the seeds of which feed the spirit

and you shall take her by the fingers of faith walk the alley of life through the woods of fast forests into the secret grove where i am cocooned a tuft of grass waiting for her, lamb to graze

waiting to enter the monastry of my ministry

esiri dafiewhare

## from: Irene and the good life

Now that she is dying Irene tells me of her good life I've had a good life, a long life I'm ready to die

she says

Irene and I work together she tells me these stories at break time, at lunch time stories of her sons four strong sons with hereditary disorders, taking over slowly, growing but she sees them strong and taught them the good life she says

Irene married young a long time ago, a man no ordinary man, a man with dreams yes dreams and disorders he exploded in her face twenty years later no less a punch in the face

she says

Irene with no money and four baby boys struck out and built a house and worked seven days, seven days seven nights and worked for her boys baked bread late at night at night the rest of her life this is life? yes

she says

And through time, lots of time the boys all passed school with socks on their hands to make it through winter so poor, charity at Christmas eating bread and tinned fruit they thanked God, praised God for their lives, long and good

she says

Irene's now old, well fifty yes old and the sons are mechanics and two are married but they all live at home extended in the basement and I visit Sundays after working with Irene, she drinks a beer we both play cribbage she shows me the garden and tells me she likes this growing things, watching life and time, all the time, happy she says

in first yellow rainboots standing ankle deep looking for fish

on flooded back lawns

gallant

child

## The Gift

When Nate was born, he come out wid' a second skin over his face like a veil. Nate mother don' want to hear nothin' 'bout de power. "He can't have no power because it ain't have no such thing," she say.

But Nate in de playpen an' he sittin' an' smilin' up at nothin'. He reachin' up an' strokin' air. His mother turn de other way. "I'm a modern woman, she say, dey ain't have no room for spirits in de modern world."

When Nate was seven he bring home a spirit for dinner. He pack de plate in front de empty chair an' his mother sit an' watch de food disappearin'. When de visitor leave Nate mother ain't say nothin'. What you could say to visitors you can't see?

Nate gone on a hike in de rain forest when he reach ten. His friends come back widout him. Two days de neighbours huntin' for de boy. De third day she find him in his bed when she wake up. "I went lookin' for Papa Bois but I ain't see him." That was when Nate discover how leather feel to skin.

After that Nate mother take even less kindly to spirits. Every time he start to talk 'bout what he could see, she hummin' "Rock of Ages". Nate learn to keep his mouth shut.

But on nights when de weather good he's wait till midnight. Then he's steal out to de front steps an' sit an' watch douen rompin' in his yard. Dey tossin' dey big straw hats in de air an' dey laughin' hard. Dey grin at Nate but dey don' talk to him. "Douen ain't playin' dey lucky, nuh," Nate say.

Michelene Adams