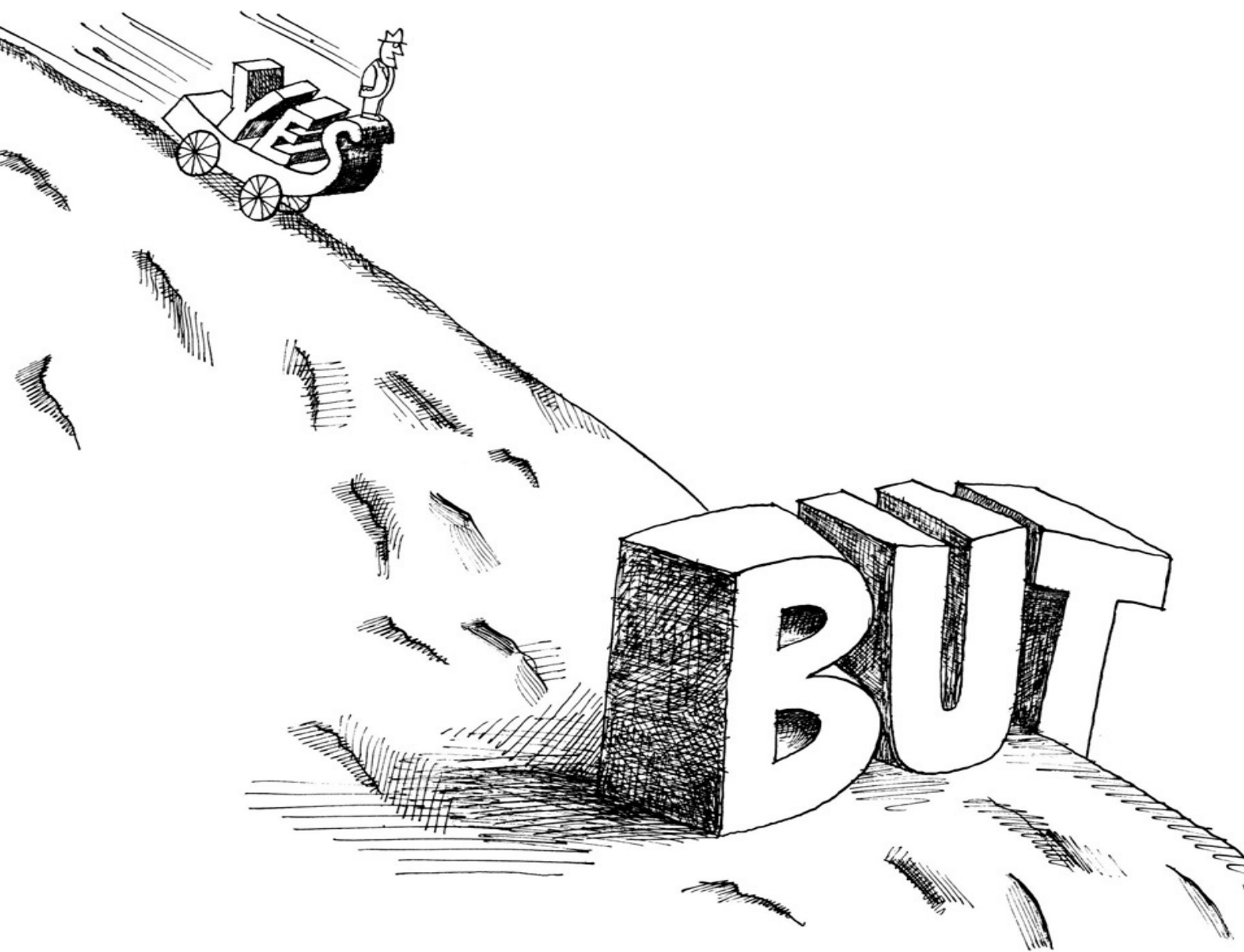


COLLECTED POEMS

MARK STRAND

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE



# COLLECTED POEMS

MARK STRAND



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*To Jessica, Lucian, and Maricruz*

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# SLEEPING WITH ONE EYE OPEN

I

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Four poems from this volume, published in an edition of 225 copies by Stone Wall Press (Iowa City), were subsequently included in the collection *Reasons for Moving*. Those poems—"The Whole Story," "The Tunnel," "Violent Storm" and "A Reason for Moving" (which was retitled "Keeping Things Whole")—appear in the contents of that second book in the current *Collected Poems*. With the exception of those four poems, the original contents of *Sleeping with One Eye Open* appears here in full.

---

# WHEN THE VACATION IS OVER FOR GOOD

will be strange  
knowing at last it couldn't go on forever,  
the certain voice telling us over and over  
that nothing would change,

and remembering too,  
because by then it will all be done with, the way  
things were, and how we had wasted time as though  
there was nothing to do,

then, in a flash  
the weather turned, and the lofty air became  
unbearably heavy, the wind strikingly dumb  
and our cities like ash,

and knowing also,  
that we never suspected, that it was something like summer  
at its most august except that the nights were warmer  
and the clouds seemed to glow,

and even then,  
because we will not have changed much, wondering what  
will become of things, and who will be left to do it  
all over again,

and somehow trying,  
but still unable, to know just what it was  
that went so completely wrong, or why it is  
that we are dying.

---

# SLEEPING WITH ONE EYE OPEN

moved by what the wind does,  
the windows  
are not rattled, nor do the various  
creaks  
of the house make their usual racket—  
they creak at  
the joints, trusses, and studs.  
Instead,  
they are still. And the maples,  
the  
times to raise havoc,  
make  
not a sound from their branches  
or twitches.  
Does my night to be rattled,  
undisturbed  
with spooks. Even the half-moon  
(half man,  
half dark), on the horizon,  
glows on  
the side casting a fishy light  
which alights  
on my floor, lavishly lording  
over the morbid  
look over me. Oh, I feel dead,  
undisturbed  
I stay in my blankets for good, and  
am forgotten.  
My room is clammy and cold,  
poorly handled  
and weird. The shivers  
wash over  
me, shaking my bones, my loose ends  
unloosen,  
and I lie sleeping with one eye open,  
hoping  
that nothing, nothing will happen.

---

# SOMETHING IS IN THE AIR

which is not meant  
that you have been reading  
the papers, or the rumors  
you have been spreading,  
or even what you hate to mention:  
the plaster cracking in your new house,  
the frequent blowing of fuses, the faucets leaking,  
the dangerous games of children.

Something is happening  
that you can't figure out.  
Things have been put in motion.  
Something is in the air.

It is there in the mix-up  
when the newscaster flubs his lines.  
It is in the trembling of a loser's hand  
as he picks up his last card.

On Sundays it is there, in the early afternoon,  
while the sun scorches the rooftops  
and a half-burnt rag is blown, shadowless,  
over the sidewalks and arcades of the dead city.

(AFTER ALBERT ARNOLD SCHOLLER)

---

# STANDING STILL

Someone is always carting  
the scenery off to the wings.  
The thickness of the air,  
the darkness that darkens there  
will cover trees and gardens,  
waterfronts and water.

In places that have been  
with me will wear away.  
Do not lift my voice  
or raise a hand. I am  
not capable of force,  
feeling myself at stake.

And if this movement seems  
a kind of theft, well then  
I am no more than witness  
to a crime. I have no choice.  
My role is forced on me,  
it keeps my nerves on edge.

I wish I were at ease.  
I am not sure of where I stand  
after the long haul to the wings,  
I make things as they come  
and let them go. I have  
no final say in the matter.

The clicking of switches,  
the shuffling behind the scenes  
most make me suspect  
that someone wishes me wrong.  
And yet, all that I see  
is level and aboveboard.

How long this will keep up,  
I am not sure. My time  
is spent recalling all

an of what has passed.  
ry my best to believe  
at nothing is wholly lost.

---

id I don't get anywhere:  
y mind does not support  
y pastime well. For all  
now, I might do better  
try picking a time  
hen all this will be over,

id the last scene arrive,  
e lights dim, and I,  
t free from all the places  
ave never really been,  
ove on beyond the curtains  
a closing night.

---

# THE MAP

composed, generally defined  
By the long sharing  
of contours, continents and oceans  
Are gathered in  
the same imaginary net.  
Over the map  
the portioned air, at times but  
A continuance  
of boundaries, assembles in  
A pure, cloudless  
copy of artificial calm.  
Lacking the haze,  
the blurred edges that surround our world,  
The map draws  
only on itself, outlines its own  
Dimensions, and waits,  
only a thing completed can,  
To be replaced  
by a later version of itself.  
Wanting the presence  
of a changing space, my attention turns  
To the world beyond  
my window where the map's colors  
Fade into a vague  
terimage and are lost  
In the variable scene  
of shapes accumulating. I see  
A group of fields  
and slowly inland from the breaking  
Of the fluted sea,  
black-wing and herring gulls, relaxed  
On the air's currents,  
hide out of sight, and trees,  
Cold as stone  
in the gray light of this coastal evening,  
Grow gradually  
out of focus. From the still  
Center of my eyes,  
circumcompassing in the end nothing



---

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