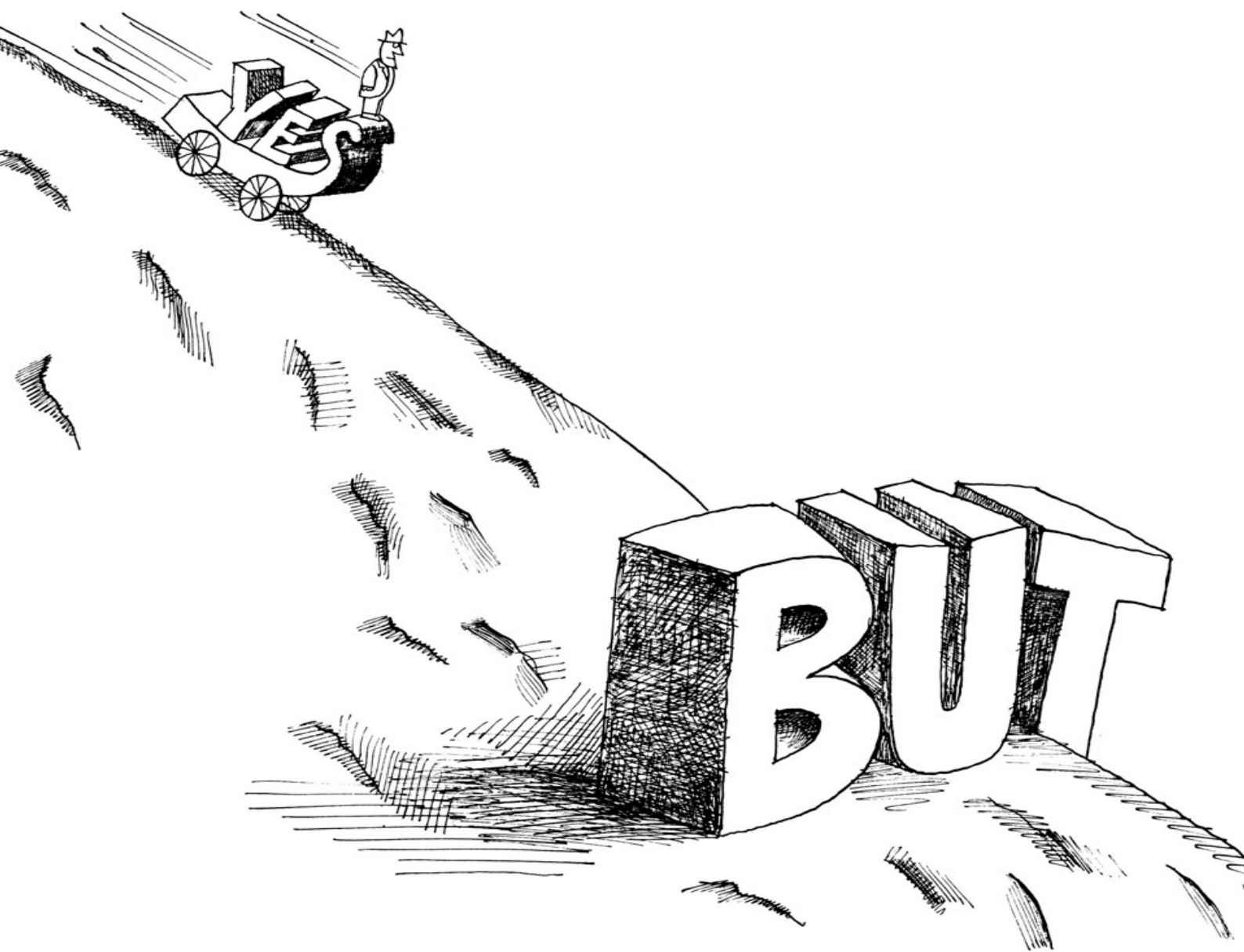


COLLECTED POEMS

MARK STRAND

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE



COLLECTED POEMS

MARK STRAND



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SLEEPING WITH ONE EYE OPEN

I

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

SLEEPING WITH ONE EYE OPEN

moved by what the wind does,
the windows
do not rattle, nor do the various
creases
of the house make their usual racket—
they leak at
the joints, trusses, and studs.
Instead,
they are still. And the maples,
the oaks
do not seem to raise havoc,
they do not
make a sound from their branches
or twigs.
It seems as if my night to be rattled,
as if I were
surrounded by spooks. Even the half-moon
(a pale
half man,
half dark), on the horizon,
does not
show its side casting a fishy light
on the
high alights
on my floor, lavishly lording
its
morbid
look over me. Oh, I feel dead,
I feel
I have
slipped away in my blankets for good, and
I am
forgotten.
My room is clammy and cold,
unattended
and weird. The shivers
rush over
me, shaking my bones, my loose ends
loosen,
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
on 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
o try picking a time
hen all this will be over,

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

THE MAP

imposed, 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
monopoly 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
the gray light of this coastal evening,
Grow gradually
out of focus. From the still
Center of my eyes,
compassing in the end nothing

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