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# Flood and In Character

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*Flood*

There are children in the trees.  
We see them from our boat  
as the waters rise. They signal us  
to try to reach them. But  
walking on water can be a problem.  
And even if there was room,  
to what shore would we bring them?  
Anyway, we are poorly provisioned.  
We won't last two weeks. So,  
what's the point? The fins of TV antennas  
scrape the hull. We leave a wake of hieroglyphics,  
an iridescence spreading outward.  
Codices tangled in the reeds. Incomplete  
sentences, alibis for our species.  
Aureoles of verbena in the air.  
A bright garment floats  
on the tea-coloured surface, stems of light  
sinking through the silt. An opaque layer  
of brownish-yellow a few inches down,  
through which we can almost make out  
the topography. The smell of humidity  
hanging over everything. Weeks of rain,  
then the sun beats down. From somewhere  
the whine of cicadas. A scum of algae  
ripples between rows of cornstalks,  
and a heron launches itself  
from atop a drowned barn, circling us  
before it dives into the syrupy current,  
then emerges from its emersion,  
bowing its neck, a fish's slippery,  
metallic comma dangling from its mouth.  
The bird is not intended as a symbol.

*In Character*

The actor on the *Today* show said what  
he was most afraid of was being seen.  
Meaning as some one other than Miss Daisy's  
chauffeur or indignant detective, soldier,  
cowhand, prisoner, or thug — that there  
might be inside him a puppeteer,  
some useless utility of self with  
no business on the screen. His light deflected  
like so many of us, modest in our skins,  
his claim to fame a personhood patented  
out of looks, gruff-voiced, belonging to the  
very bricks we see him walking on.  
Late night, the pavement slick, windows reflecting  
darkly the bleakness of the street, taking  
us with him into the emptiness of  
the building next door, extinction looming  
in the corridors, in the trashed stairwell,  
where we want him not to go. We, content  
to be visible — lonely witnesses  
who strive to live only within our names.

*The*  
**FIDDLEHEAD**

Atlantic Canada's International Literary Journal



... a fiddlehead, that small plant  
that grows in the Saint John River valley  
in the spring, and which is said to be  
symbolic of the sun.

Alfred Bailey

February 1945

(first issue of *The Fiddlehead*)

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