

MARGARET AVISON

Waiting (e.g. for the piano mover)

I wait. Not-here, not-then yet,
myself nowhere. Caught
up by, carried away by, and in-
tent on
the not yet now.
Emptying moment by hour all
else but only waiting,

until I hate the hollowing
of it. Hate the
exhorter's 'watch and pray'. (Is praying
sometimes waiting's impatience?)

'Watch'? not the spectators
shoaled under stadium lights, eyeing
the runner on third. He *was*
(will be again) a man partial to
woodsmoke, chooser of bedroom
wallpaper, who towards August will
think of his granny's anniversary....
Tonight he is
'runner on third'. He 'watches'.
One hundred percent he is
eyes, power unreleased,
unreleased swiftness.

Empties to action?

'Watch' is vigil as well, that plain
being-with
away past back-&-forth times,
absorbed in the... other ...
in unfamiliar country, unaware
of landscape or
last light, only
intensely with, however helplessly.

The vigil-keeper dwells in 'here'
thankful for the not-yet
that so deepens this 'now',
whereas...

Out in the miles and hills of bush
stand firetowers. A curl of smoke?
His to report. Exact data. And like
an eremite on a far weather station
he smiles to know
voices inaudibly
immediate through air.

A 'watcher' again.
Why must I only
wait.

Will I find some kind of watching
interminably expected of me
after this waiting is over?

Walled in by drumming
fingers and famished with
looking on walls.

* * * * *

O my imperious Counsellor
you show even my planiformity
casts shadows.
You heed no walls, closed doors,
airless impatience.

Now do I wait with you?

This chestnut's gummy fists
unclench; moist, rich
fullgrown—a new
world of new leaves!

'Wait' has become 'watch
(and pray').
A dead stall turned to an all
unreadied expectation
that makes a now
of any now, of only one
not yet.

*Margaret Avison's poetry has won the Governor General's Award twice.
Her most recent collection of poems is No Time.*