

no signs posted which state: "Single Women — Keep Out!" The exclusion is subtle and practised, often unconsciously, by friends who consider themselves broad-minded and above petty forms of discrimination. Is it because women invest so much of their time and emotional energy in their relationships with men? Whatever the reasons, I sense that I am now less desirable than I was before. The irony is that I should be more in demand; the time and energy I once devoted to my marriage have been diverted into developing and improving myself as a person.

I am no exception; my case is the rule for so many women in my age bracket. Statistics indicate this, but until recently I did not identify with them. Now the numbers have acquired human faces. They are people with grey hair, some of them frail and stooped, many of them poor and alone, still reeling from the multiple blows life has dealt them. They all know my fear.

Some chastise me, saying it is wrong to be so puffed up with self-pity. They cite the many possibilities that exist for enriching retirement. These can become golden years of relaxation and enjoyment, "the last of life for which the first was made." I reject these clichés. They may hold true for some, but they do not apply to others. My resistance stems from a hard core of resentment: I was not permitted to *choose* the time and place to embark on this new phase of my life. Retirement is a major adjustment, a complete break with past organization. It should be mine completely, determined by me, planned by me. Then I could approach it with zest and enthusiasm — as if it were truly a new voyage of discovery.

Instead, I am grounded in still, shallow waters, tugging at the restraining anchor in my desire to ride the high seas again. I could not choose the date of my birth, nor am I able to determine when I will die. Surely I have the right to choose the date of my retirement. Must it have the same inevitability as the other two?

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## ANNE MARRIOTT

### Exit

(The natural earth  
scares us with metaphors  
we pave them out of sight  
inventing more  
more obvious)

Never clearly marked  
it differs with the maps  
fingering off from the highway suddenly.  
A driver ahead is drawn away  
before he has time to signal  
is out of sight in seconds.  
We speculate as to where he may have gone  
the possible nature of the territory.

More uncertain sights are coming up.  
We switch lanes quickly  
putting more space between  
us and an undesired turnoff  
making a barrier  
if only of air.

We have a long way  
(we believe)  
to go yet.

(from *Aqua*, Wolsak and Wynn, 1991)

## MARGARET RODGERS

### Hard Currency

The days fall away like  
ripe plums.  
September gold  
Is spent lavishly  
Then:  
the largesse gives way  
to iron cold  
steel gray  
unforgiving  
frugal  
winter.  
My days