

Fall 1988

Water; 1207 Muscatine Avenue

John Melvin

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Sweat Socks from Hell

They were like trumpets announcing something
to cows asleep in a snowstorm.
Wherever they passed were bent little scorchmarks
and athletes hopping on their amazed toes.
Fountains embraced them with a kind of sneeze
and spit them out again
and were ever after lustful, greedy for coin
or virgins—of which there are now so few.
Everywhere populations buckled their boots
and sent up for word of new powers
to set against these marauding equipages,
for new kinds of foot death and disease
with which their favor might be bought.
But it was no good; they kept coming. At last
everyone could see them, an army of random quote marks
on the move, burning and sweating
into everything as they cackled and ran and ran.

Christopher Howell