

Louis Simpson

Peacocks

There were peacocks in the vicinity.

He swung at the ball, slipped,
and fell on his club.
The shaft, that was made of steel,
broke, and went right through his body.

He must have lain there for hours
concealed by a hedge.

Some who had been out on the course
that day, said they heard screams
but thought it was the peacocks.

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I met the author of *Peacocks*
in Dallas, at a Holiday Inn.
We were there on a writers' junket.
Torrance was the lion of the hour—
he had just won the Critics' Book Award.

But he couldn't get his breakfast.
As I watched he became increasingly irritable.
The waitress came and, without asking,
filled his cup with coffee to the brim.

"Who asked for coffee?" he said. "I drink tea."

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"One squirtshit punk on the *New York Review*
says that I write about characters
and tell a story. What's wrong with that?
What the hell do they want?"

I said, the prevalent view
holds there is no reality,
and to think you're representing life
is an illusion. There is only writing.

"They can keep their fairy word games,"
he said, "I'll stay with life."

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Members of the Island Bay Yacht Club
like to lie in close to shore,
anchor side by side, and go partying.

It appears that around midnight
Torrance fell, trying to jump
from one deck to another.
The autopsy said a concussion
followed by drowning, in three feet of water.

Nobody noticed. They were in one of the cabins
partying and having a good time.