

Men at Forty

Donald Justice

Donald Justice was born in 1925 in Miami and died in 2004 in Iowa City. His poetry often deals with men's social roles and the struggles with personal identities within the confines of social "expectations" and "responsibilities." He taught at several universities, including Princeton.

—*Jessica Isaacs*

Men at forty
Learn to close softly
The doors to rooms they will not be
Coming back to.

At rest on a stair landing,
They feel it
Moving beneath them now like the deck of a ship,
Though the swell is gentle.

And deep in mirrors
They rediscover
The face of the boy as he practices tying
His father's tie there in secret

And the face of that father,
Still warm with the mystery of lather.
They are more fathers than sons themselves now.
Something is filling them, something

That is like the twilight sound
Of the crickets, immense,
Filling the woods at the foot of the slope
Behind their mortgaged houses.

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