

# Quarter Mercy

Tim Ramick

Winter in the north, the  
intimate north with its  
quantum whites, one fears  
the blue tonalities, the  
disappearing immediacy of  
midnight and noon, one  
lodged between the very  
beginning and the begotten  
word, the wasness and the  
withness, sperm gone stale

Autumn in the west, the  
inanimate west with its  
quadratic light, one fears the  
cobalt atop the goldenrod, the  
energies of developed  
morning, angels and  
beholdings, observation  
without recognition,  
recognition without  
articulation, articulation

Q.M.

Spring in the east, the  
intricate east with its quixotic  
mud, one fears the blunt  
award of oblique pink, one  
shame-struck by authentic  
bloom, by feminine attempts  
to comprehend spinal texts,  
the give of sperm and the take  
of egg, the meek inheritance  
and the righteous paradox,

Summer in the south, the  
immaculate south with its  
quicksilver mercy, one fears  
the mature green, the float of  
early morning and the sinking  
of evening into night,  
benevolent leaves, interior  
hush and exterior choke,  
sperm boiled in verdant hope,  
wilderness prophesizing

and spinal, the lion given no  
quarter by the lamb, one most  
fearing the cycle twisted into  
infinity, the augering self-  
wound clock, one stepping  
into one's front yard under a  
new moon, onto the slippery  
slope of the solstice, this  
winter of children's intimacies,  
dreamt gossamer garments

without sperm renewal, the  
spine's pluck, one most fearing  
the cycle gone spiral, the  
auguring breaths, one  
stepping into one's side yard  
under a crescent moon,  
beyond the weathering edge of  
the equinox, this autumn of  
children's inanimacies, dreamt  
mobility under stripped limbs,

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one's spine crimped, one most  
fearing the predictable cycle,  
the auguring hindsight, one  
stepping into one's side yard  
under a crescent moon, within  
the echo of the equinox, this  
spring of children's intricacies,  
dreamt permissive language  
under blossomed limbs, the  
fragranced yard, the staunch I,

brimstone forgiveness, one  
noodle-spined, one most  
fearing the self-prophetic  
cycle, the augering orbit of self  
around self, one stepping into  
one's back yard under a full  
moon, on the incline of the  
solstice, this summer of  
children's inadequacies,  
dreamt lessons under lunar

under starlight, the snow-  
hushed yard, the brace I, the  
I representing columns  
supporting the self's ceiling,  
the bleached chandelier and  
the steamed christian carpet,  
storm windows shut against  
future sleet, the coffers  
stuffed, bountiful cannings on  
cellar shelves, the cohesion of

the sequenced yard, the  
phantom I, the I as trope for  
deflection and accountability,  
husk and clench and  
abstinence, stretching the  
strings of lute skeletons,  
residing in oblongs of  
sunlight, clean in their  
containment, air laced with  
citrus, the wooden road

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the I as substitute for sandbags  
and levees, sinew strain and  
gargoyle flatulence, solace in  
living water, the amity of  
industry and thrift, cobbled  
roofs made accessible by the  
branches of muscular trees,  
language of upper wonder,  
syntax on fire, the mahogany  
of milk and the agate thrush,

scrutiny, the night-dewed  
yard, the erect I, the I  
standing for the vertical shift  
toward sanctimony, squeezed  
between the thimble and the  
spindle and the honoring of  
god, the inventory not of hairs  
on heads, but of sucker fish  
on shark backs, neighborhood  
remora snug in their salty

homes whose earthbound  
leaves fluttered down without  
memory of mulch, the history  
of mulch, the history of ash,  
swept down from the north  
toward the equator, salted  
glaciers, one resisting the I,  
the beloved revelatory I, that  
gospelized self, one's front yard  
exposed to the street by a

marked by termite progression  
toward homes of concrete  
couches, of mathematical  
chairs, of ribs under cotton,  
sheets glistening with salt, one  
avoiding the I, the tender  
physician I, that gospelized self,  
one's side yard a repository for  
private tools, westernized  
beyond their rust to tend a

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shoes and hands and rooted  
books, saltwater children  
portaging popsicle sticks from  
gutter to gutter, easternized and  
flooded toward origin,  
one rejecting the I, the  
genealogically mounted I, that  
gospelized self, one's side yard  
prostrate to the resurrected  
sun, the grass mown and

clusters under the eaves of  
wisteria homes, roofs sagging  
under the summery weight of  
southernizing moonlight, the  
christopher noose around the  
neck, albatrossed and lode-  
stoned, the revering of need,  
one declining the I, the  
immediately baptized I, that  
gospelized self, one's backyard a

curbside lamp, gawkers and  
strollersby, and so one shuns  
the false we, the collective I,  
and its perversions, the  
genuine we as rare as true  
north, one surviving on  
blubber and bread, one  
counting on the blindness of  
strangers, one's mirrors resistant  
to the cut of diamonds, all of

paved garden, cinderblock  
figurines, and so one skirts the  
false we, the collective I, and  
its platitudes, the genuine we  
as rare as true love, one  
surviving on sugar and salt,  
one skittish around resident  
scraps, one's allegiance unbent  
toward the most perfunctory  
and worthiest of clubs, all of

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aerated and moistened,  
neighborhood tears, and so  
one denies the false we, the  
collective I, and its  
persuasions, the genuine we as  
rare as true messiahs, one  
surviving on cheese and  
honey, one wary of family  
chaff, one's dowry coming up  
spades, all of this under the

sanctuary for freaks, gabbing  
marginalia, and so one refuses  
the false we, the collective I,  
and its profanities, the  
genuine we as rare as true  
confession, one surviving on  
butter and jam, one counting  
on the kindness of strange  
attractors, the magnetism of  
curious hearts, all of this

this under the illusion of  
mutual understanding, the  
craft of storytelling in  
hibernation, wintry mammalian  
stupor, the annihilation of  
adjacency, the obliteration of  
arm-in-arm, stark, scarp, slate,  
scree, one choosing words  
from the shelf to bury oneself,  
the intelligible wobble of fear,

this under the auspices of  
artistic freedom, the reins of  
discipline in the belly of the  
mount, bitter leather cud, the  
asphyxiation of conviction,  
the sure suffocation, skew,  
surge, scald, scrub, one  
grabbing words from the air  
to choke oneself, the  
elemental string of shame,

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guise of critical acumen, the  
grace of wit lost to the  
cornerstone, skyscraping  
toothpick cathedral, the  
electrocution of proxy, the  
torching of arm's length,  
smite, shuck, scrim, shod, one  
plucking words from the tree  
to curse oneself, the  
associational action of guilt,

under the umbrella of  
personal expression, the skill  
of public oratory gone with the  
confederacy, smoky battlefield  
stump, the crucifixion of  
doubt, the modest calvary,  
storm, sleep, slough, steam,  
one lifting words from the  
grave to save oneself, the  
situational ethics of fertile grief,

midday or midnight, snow on  
the ground, snow in the air,  
one pressed into the couch  
within one's insulated atrium,  
lamps out, the snow in  
motion, lit by streetlights,  
concentrating one's gaze, one  
neither in the frail position of  
strength nor the strong  
position of frailty, one

mid-morning or night is  
young, leaves on the lawn,  
leaves in one's hair, one  
pressed into the park's slope  
under the oak sheddings, the  
chill wind risen, one's  
condition neither that of  
willful or pliable, nor that of  
passionate or obligatory, one  
accepting the pressing as one

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mid-afternoon or dead of  
night, petals on the pond,  
petals in one's hair, one  
pressed into the park's slope  
under the blossom swirl, the  
warm breeze risen, one's  
condition neither that of  
tempter or tempted, nor that  
of coerced or coercer, one  
accepting the pressing as one

early morning or early  
evening, bugs in the air, bugs  
on the ground, one pressed  
into the divan within one's  
screened porch, the clouds of  
mosquitoes fracturing one's  
gaze, one neither in the free  
position of entrapment nor  
the trapped position of  
freedom, one accepting the



accepting the pressing as one's  
skylight accepts the white  
accumulation, the daylight or  
the darkness nearly half  
spent, the darkness holding  
sovereignty in the northern  
winter, one theoretically aware  
that the opposite hemisphere is  
flipfopped, that the equator's  
seasonal shifts are subtle, that

accepts leaves in one's palms,  
the daylight or the darkness in  
full swing, the western  
autumn graceful in its clock  
revolutions, one oblivious to  
the differences of unvisited  
elsewheres, nostalgic for the  
spectrum of eastern autumns,  
one imagining and then  
dismissing any location of

accepts petals on one's lips,  
the light or darkness waning,  
the eastern spring escorting  
them with equal zeal, one  
oblivious to the differences in  
unvisited elsewheres, nostalgic  
for the lurid eastered assault of  
southern springs, one  
imagining and subsequently  
dismissing any locale of

pressing as one would accept  
solitary insect suck, daylight  
or darkness waxing, the  
southern summer heat set to  
gradually crescendo or  
imperceptibly diminish, one  
theoretically aware that the  
opposite hemisphere is  
flipfopped, that the equator's  
seasonal shifts are subtle, that

the poles endure extremes,  
one being pressed by a body  
one agreed to be pressed by, a  
body of weight and substance,  
actual weight and undeniable  
substance, a body upon one's  
body that isn't one's body, with a  
heartbeat that isn't one's  
heartbeat, with memories that  
aren't one's memories and with

eternal melancholy, one being  
pressed by a body one agreed  
to be pressed by, a body of  
libido and spirit, natural and  
divine spirit and libido, a  
body upon one's body that  
isn't one's body, with dreams  
that resemble one's dreams but  
that aren't one's dreams, with  
questions meant to match

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perpetual bloom, one being  
pressed by a body one agreed  
to be pressed by, a body of  
breaths and heartbeats, earned  
and graced breaths and  
heartbeats, a body upon one's  
body that isn't one's body,  
with a history that isn't one's  
history, with fears that aren't  
one's fears even if they

the poles endure extremes,  
one being pressed by a body  
one agreed to be pressed by, a  
body of emotions and ideas,  
genuine emotions and ideas of  
authenticity, a body upon  
one's body that isn't one's  
body, with an aroma that isn't  
one's aroma, with perceptions  
that aren't one's perceptions,

memories that resemble one's  
memories, the body wanted and  
the body taken for granted,  
whatever the measure of gratitude,  
at twelve o'clock bewitching or  
twelve o'clock high, a mortal  
terrestrial body, neither incubus  
nor succubus nor doppelganger,  
like one's body but not at all like  
one's body, not one's empirical

one's answers, the body  
wanted and the body taken  
for granted, whatever the  
measure of gratitude, in the  
mature morning or the  
maturing night, a mortal  
terrestrial body, neither incubus  
nor succubus nor doppelganger,  
like one's body but not at all like  
one's body, not one's accursed

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resemble one's fears, the body  
wanted and the body taken  
for granted, whatever the  
measure of gratitude, in the  
middle of the afternoon or in  
deepest night, a mortal  
terrestrial body, neither incubus  
nor succubus nor doppelganger,  
like one's body but not at all like  
one's body, not one's inalienable

that can't be one's perceptions,  
the body wanted and the body  
taken for granted, whatever  
the measure of gratitude, in  
the early morning or the  
earliest tilt of twilight, a mortal  
terrestrial body, neither incubus  
nor succubus nor doppelganger,  
like one's body but not at all like  
one's body, not one's authentic

body, one's body from painful  
birth to painless death, one alone  
in one's front yard, one not alone  
on one's atrium couch, one neither  
alone nor unalone with the I, the I  
as waste material from an obsolete  
machine in decline, the inherited  
I, one-fourth ramick, the mother's  
father, derricking oil, not from the  
diamond's mound, the beloved

body, one's body from cohesion to  
dispersal, one alone in one's side  
yard, one not alone on the park's  
slope, one neither alone nor  
unalone with the I, the I as illusory  
product of finite perspective, the  
inherited I, one-fourth taylor, the  
father's father, belonging to a  
hurricane club, tracking their  
progress from inland sanctuary,

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body, one's body from parent's lust  
to god's demand, one alone in  
one's side yard, one not alone on  
the park's slope, one neither alone  
nor unalone with the I, the I as  
tainted result of assumed  
autonomy, the inherited I, one-  
fourth sayes, the father's mother,  
dead before the mail was delivered  
from town, trumped by the spade,

body, one's body from simple birth to  
simpler death, one alone in one's  
back yard, one not alone on one's  
porch divan, one neither alone nor  
unalone with the I, the I as  
insinuated ego swollen with humility  
and ambition, the inherited I, one-  
fourth ceasley, the mother's mother,  
laughter from the happy diaphragm,  
resonant through the heart to the

brother's middling, the  
envied moniker, the martyred  
grandfather, grizzle-necked,  
belief in the world, the  
universe, all that exists as  
holy, partaking of the divine  
scale, on one's flank on the  
road's shoulder watching cars  
go by, one's thoughts upon  
anatomy (exterior), the curve

consider exchanging the o for an e  
and tossing every I, one's resilient  
grandfather, deaf and pitched,  
belief in the world, the universe,  
all that exists as created by god,  
seven days or seven trillion, up to  
one's ears in sagebrush on the side  
of the trail watching ghostriders  
go by, one's thoughts upon  
anatomy (external), bowlegged

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the pointed shovel, white hair  
shocked from photographs,  
one's unknown grandmother,  
dead and pinched, belief in the  
world, the universe, all that  
exists as redeemable, in severe  
need of redemption, on one's  
belly on the levee watching  
barges go by, one's thoughts  
upon anatomy (interior), the

eyes, cheer gone north for the winter,  
one's charismatic grandmother,  
sparkle-eyed, belief in the world, the  
universe, all that exists as coming  
into being of its own accord, the  
natural unfolding, the primary  
movement, up to one's waist in the  
water under the trestle watching  
trains go by, one's thoughts upon  
anatomy (internal), spleen and

of a shoulder, the sunwashed  
hair along a wrist, protrusions  
and indentations, creases and  
knobs, one as aware of the  
geometric physicality of gravel as  
one is of fantasized relief, the  
road's mirage and one's wistful  
travel, sitting around a kitchen  
table with friends, assorted  
chairs in vague alignment,

and pigeontoed, arthritic and  
magnificent, joints and the  
propensity for motion, awkward  
and akimbo, one as aware that the  
angles of repose never intersect as  
one is that hope is perpendicular  
to itself, the rider's glances and  
one's redolent squint, sitting at a  
kitchen table with friends,  
assorted chairs in vague

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mechanisms of circulation, the  
majestic bloodstream, artery  
to thoroughfare, capillary to  
cul-de-sac, one as aware of the  
barge engine's effort as one is  
of one's pulse, the levee's lift  
and one's spirit's sag, sitting  
around a kitchen table with  
friends, assorted chairs in vague  
alignment, scattered volumes

viscera, gall and bile, every  
fluid of life, cream to crimson,  
pungent and viscous, one as  
aware of the water within as  
one is of the water without,  
the creek's flow and the body's  
humidity, sitting around a  
kitchen table with friends,  
assorted chairs in vague  
alignment, scattered bean husks

scattered glasses and bottles  
and ashtrays, the table willing  
to accept elbows and brows  
and stray barbs, four friends  
around a table at midnight,  
dark noon, unaware of the  
time, a haphazard gathering  
with no conscious purpose  
beyond talk, the talk of  
attempted discovery, sifting

alignment, scattered shadows  
and marks and rippings, the  
table willing to uphold  
notions of confluence,  
matters of dispersal, four  
friends around a table,  
lamplit or sunlit, the fetish of  
the concept, the idea as idea  
and the idea as substance,  
teasing possibilities from

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and papers and mugs of  
campfire tea, the table willing to  
support fidelity and bravado  
and indignance, two couples  
around a table, quintessential  
afternoon, the kids out on the  
lawn imagining themselves  
rabbits, or middle-of-the-night,  
the kids long asleep after their  
slumber party energies, the

and candy and aphorisms, the  
table willing to entertain the  
wisdom of inclusion, the mercy  
of exclusion, four friends around  
a table, dawn or dusk,  
manipulators of words, fiddlers  
with atmospheres and patterns  
and disclosures and histories,  
their talk about language, with  
language as the vehicle and

through daily bewilderment, the  
absence of a pressing body, the  
wrong pressing body, the pressing  
body of choice at the worst of  
times, the sudden pressing body of  
fate bearing down upon the  
isolated I, the manufacturing of  
the presumptive we, the  
northerning clarity, one's front  
yard musings about the unlikely

unlikelyhoods, formed  
wonderings, the architecture  
of what ifs, one's side yard  
accepting leaves from the  
neighbor's tree, a way to  
soft-focus the I, to pacify  
the we, one's cheeks flushed  
in mid-morning sunshine or  
full-on-night chill, the  
curious palpable xeroxing of

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couples in love within their  
couplings, their talk reflecting  
their linked foundations amid  
their individual panics, the  
eternal knee-knockings of the I,  
the embracings and disavowals  
of the we, rabbits in the jaws of  
deer, moistened eyes under the  
influence of tabletop bonfires,  
the overt mass production of

language as the destination, the  
continuity of random marks,  
the liberation of congruent texts  
throughout the debris field of  
the I, scattered across pluralized  
plains that insinuate and  
propulgate and verify the we,  
the southernning togetherness,  
one's back yard baskings under  
the belief in the confident



feeding of thousands, the death  
horseman, apocalyptic bent,  
contractual scourge, one's  
phlegmatic hands in one's lap,  
the desired zenith, one's  
awareness of destiny neither  
categorical nor contingent, one  
avoiding quarter from the  
storm, all for the vocal  
aspirant fecal diligent I.

fish, the famine horseman,  
apocalyptic lean, conceptual  
purge, one's melancholic  
hands in one's lap, the  
fading sunset, one's  
awareness of linearity  
neither cardinal nor ordinal,  
one seeking pardon from the  
norm, all for the viral  
adamant feral diffident I.

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loaves, the war horseman,  
apocalyptic tilt, congenital  
merge, one's sanguine hands  
in one's lap, the brightening  
sunrise, one's awareness of  
cause and effect neither  
teleological nor mechanistic,  
one shunning haven from  
harm, all for the vernal  
apparent festal despondent I.

feeding of thousands,  
the pestilence horseman,  
apocalyptic wish, confessional  
urge, one's choleric hands in  
one's lap, the feared nadir, one's  
awareness of origin neither  
fundamental nor charismatic,  
one swallowing the code to the  
alarm, all for the venal  
aberrant final decadent I.