

TARN

—by **Michael Mott**

*Tout ce qu'on donne fleurit,
tout ce qu'on garde pourrit.*

—Maurice Utrillo

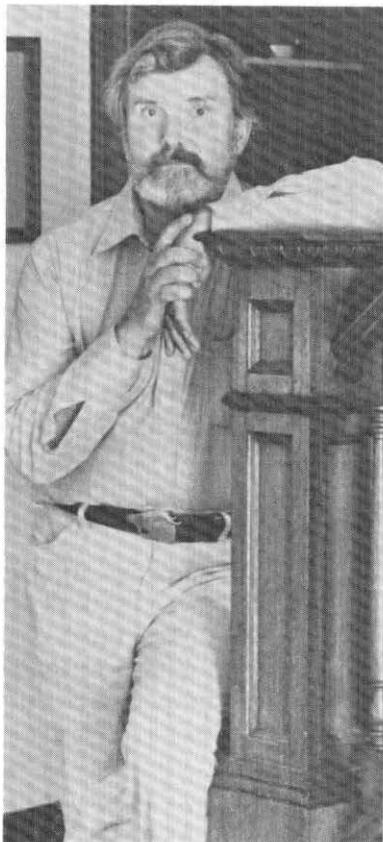
Sweetness and bitterness of rivers: Tarn,
Tamar, Aveyron, Chattahoochee, and a stream
on Canigou, I name you, sweetness and bitter-
ness of exile, a taste of salts and sulfur

each distinct, as if the essence of the stone
flowed in their water only, left the stone
no more a stone than the ghost shells
of certain insects, long outgrown, that cling

by their ghost fingers to dry stalks. What's
gone out of everything outgrown, out of rooms
flowing through open windows into streets
like this one? Montauban, red city by a

tawny river, what love of mine was ever so distinct
it left its essence on the air? I mean to taste
the wind whenever the wind turns, an emptiness
between old buildings where ten thousand Sundays

crumble the pink brick and the blistered shutters.
Red city of dead martyrs, who died perhaps with eyes
watching the Tarn, the traffic, meaning to ask
the meaning. In any given moment what we hold onto rots.



MICHAEL MOTT

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