

Perish the Thought by J. Morris

My books are discontent. I can tell:
they crouch, glum, on the tenement shelves.
Some lament their cracked spines,
their tattered faded jackets.
Long novels by female authors
are feeling fat. The latest macho sensation
blushes behind the blurbs gaudy as
unearned medals. A snobby tome
of metaphysics is slashed to
remainders on its rickety table
of contents. Has someone judged them
by their covers, their acid-free innards,
their deckled tummies and dyed flat-tops?
No, much worse than that: a life sentence
to make sense, to keep the world sane:
impossible and they know it, my poor books,
they puff dust and lean left, lean right,
cardboard shacks longing for collapse.
The ruin of my library would be
their liberation. No longer to give their word!
To speak volumes! O to be returned
to pulp and bulk, to illegible atoms!
I won't let them do it, of course.
All slaves have bad days – the master's mood
can be contagious – and mine
will get over this one. Tomorrow,
next week, they'll marshal phonemes,
phrases, tropes, and sing their signifiers
once again. No more questions (how
a pattern of shaped ink talks,
how it says the same thing, first
or nth edition, how

we hear it, why we think
this is not madness too) for now.

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