

DAPHNE MARLATT / peripherals

driving past a herd of, they looked a herd, boulders hunched in rain on a glass fringe, hunched in a curve around what? peripheral. their rounded shoulders slick with wet. patient, communing together. made me feel excised from stone presence.

then why, when i turned the corner onto the street that would take me home, did i remember Penang Hill, a cave on the path that sloped down through jungly hillside to our house. hill rock, stone with the dry earth smell of something more ancient than any seven year old's desire to test the limits of fear, see what might be inside that dark half-obscured by a fringe of green, eyelashes hiding an eye . . .

some of the houses on the street i was driving down had jack o'lanterns ready for lighting, tombstones sticking out of their lawn, some had air-filled spooks peering from upper balconies. so yes, it was that night we came to delight in, when imagination can run wild. but then my mother always said No and yanked me back on the path she was herding the three of us along, to or away from home, thinking a cave at that time of the Emergency could house ammunition, a crouching communist guerilla surveying our tile-roof home from above. blue tiles, still white walls in a green activity of birdcalls, yattering monkeys, snakes, centipedes, and the tufted-ear jungle cat who stalked across the terrace to wolf our dog's dinner from his dish—he was what we were afraid of, knowing nothing of guns or guerillas.

later this evening, giddy madness, groups of small children wild in other-worldly garb throng our street, rushing to meet the magic of terror with its lights, ghosts, gunpowder smoke,

rushing to meet the open edge of Event . . .

hollowed out in the quiet light of morning with its blackened pumpkins, scorched firework wrappers. Even as imagined, peripheral now.