

SNAKE PIT, 2010
- Vilma Ginzberg

SHOCK TREATMENT
GreenGulchZenCenter

half century ago
before Prozac or Serpasil
in that gaunt forbidding prison doctors called hospital
bughousers nuthouse
patients Snake Pit
three or four of us
keys chained around our waists
ambush the screaming maniac
wrapping her in cold-water-soaked sheets

the shock stops her flailing
just long enough
we strap her mummy-wrapped undulating body on the bed
piling on blankets
until
heat of her own life force rises from within
warms and tranquilizes her
to who knows what fitful though temporary quietude
we think it cruel but necessary

*tonight
the silence of this holy place of peace
ambushes me like a cold sheet
straps me into my bed of solitude
while serpents of familiar clamor
flail in futility inside my chilled skin*

*unwillingly
I hear the hissing subside
where are they going those maniacal decibels*

*whose company I had come to treasure?
until
embers of my own soul's journey
rekindle warmth rising from within
infusing, comforting me
I scribble these words
as serpents sleep silently in their secret dens*

and I remember