

*Six Characters Out of Context*

(after Virginia Woolf)

Richard Royal\*

I am soft, says Neville,  
I comprehend the true aesthetic of sensuality.

I am hard, says Bernard,  
I comprehend the true vision of nature.

I am an artist, says Rhoda,  
I comprehend my own redemption.

I am a thinker, says Louis,  
I imitate other people's comprehensions.

I am a sex object, says Susan,  
I comprehend the superiority of the oppressed.

I am a child, says Jinny,  
I comprehend the needlessness of age.

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I am a yawn, says Jinny,  
a picture looked at too long.

I am an embryo, says Susan,  
graying yet unborn.

I am nostalgia, says Louis,  
stuck in the second time around.

I am bureaucracy, says Rhoda,  
the echo of a feeling.

I am a wave, says Bernard,  
staking my claim in the water.

I am a brilliant idea, says Neville,  
suitable only for fiction.

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