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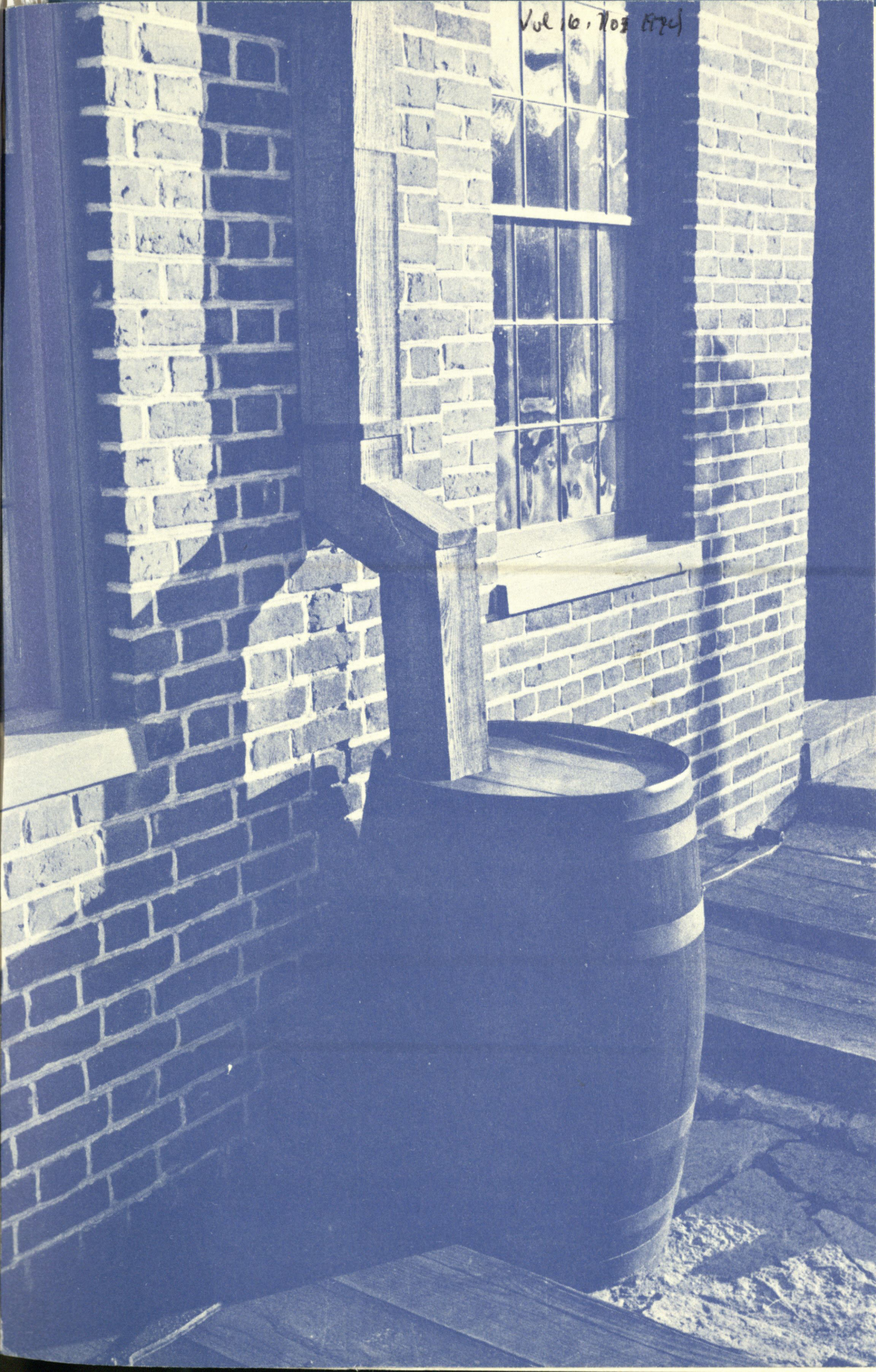
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editor: Mary Dehmlow * ghost: Karla Feeley * copy: Carol Wahlfeldt * critiquing: Rob Raddatz * distribution: Jeff Nicholls * layout: Betty Unger * typesetter: Rosalyn Voige * cover photo: Sue Anglemire * advisor: Richard Lee



Sue Anglemire

the LIGHTER poetry issue

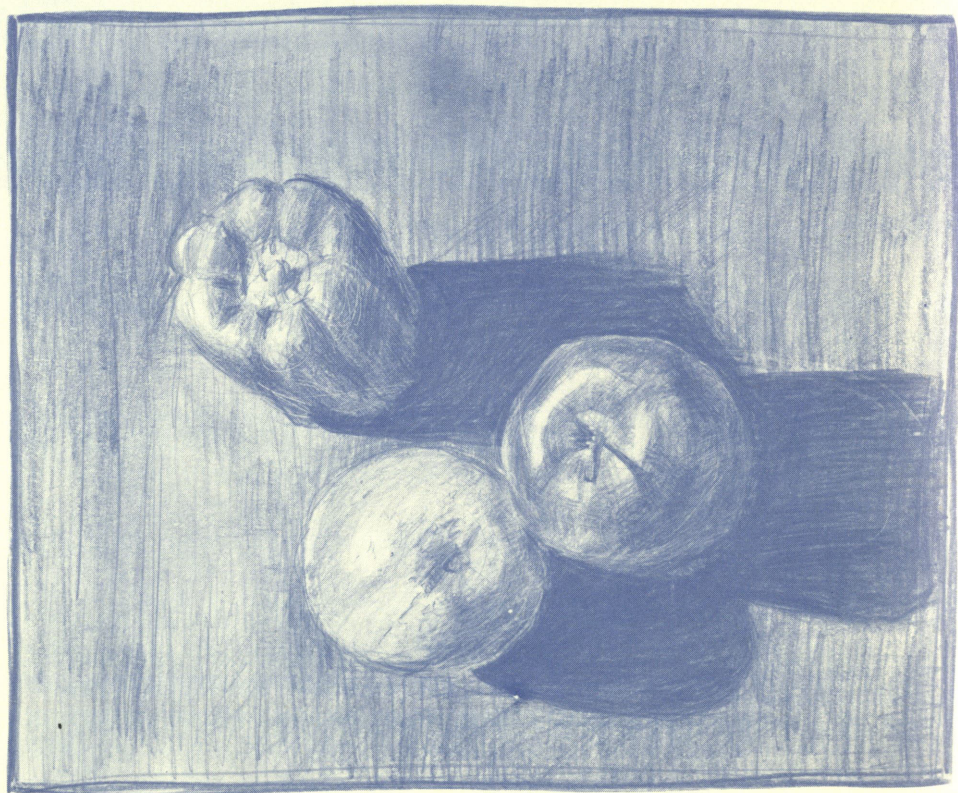


poetry retrospective, pages 9 to 22

Spring-walk Sonnet

Mark blades of grass that newly push their tips
above the hard dark earth and swelling buds
that sway on cradling breezes hardy pips
of lily rose of marigold see floods
of sunshine drenching evergreen and elm
hear sharp high cries of sparrows wrens and crakes
spy flashing tails of squirrels seize a realm
of nascent splendor life with force that shakes
my soul awake from winter's ruining sleep
drive through each tendril stamen nerve and vein
new sap new blood harrow my heart strike deep
till childlike wide-eyed wonder blooms constrain
my mind's incessant labor snarled and swirled
Break the front of anger with your beauty newborn world

A F Sponberg
March, 1974



Peter Schaefer



Ervin Dukatz

Winter on the Isle of the Lotos-Eaters

*Down
sifted swirling flocks of snow
On a strangely muted landscape softened
by the silent fallen
Down*

*In a soft green chair
A faded woman sat, mending worn socks:
Lethean waters murmured down
the winding way of quiet days,
Whispering songs of dreamful ease.*

James R. Looman

on frost

Desert Places

LOOMAN

*Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.*

*The woods around it have it — it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.*

*And lonely as it is that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less —
A blanket whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.*

*They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars — on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.*

Robert Frost

James R. Looman
September, 1973

In an October, 1949 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Peter Viereck refers to Robert Frost as the "...New England tragic poet. . . ." Viereck states that "Frost's benign calm, the comic mask of a whittling rustic, is designed for gazing — without dizziness — into a tragic abyss of desperation." This vision of a tragic universe is a thematic concern which runs throughout Frost's poetry. He senses an underlying horror in the universe, a horror manifested not only in nature and natural forces, but in an abyss of loneliness which envelops the individual. Frost's "Desert Places" comprises his most chilling and comprehensive statement of this theme.

The title already evokes an image of barrenness, isolation, and aridity. The plural in "places" suggests that these "desert" associations are not restricted to a single geographic location, or even strictly to a geographical significance.

The first line creates a combined aural and mental impression of hopelessness. The alliteration of "f" and the repetition of "falling" propel the line forward and intimate that the descent of the "snow" and "night" is ineluctable. The "oh" set off by commas functions as an audible moan of despair. The next line restricts the scene to a field which the poet passes, and would seem to insinuate, therefore, that the action of the poem is purely external. The final two lines of the first stanza continue the description of the scene, a description now permeated with ominous connotations. The ground is "...almost covered smooth in snow. . .," an insulating, unfeeling blanket. The only traces of life still visible are "...a few weeds and stubble. . .," an image directly recalling the "withered brake/And deadweeds. . ." of "The Onset." The natural scene depicted in the first stanza now serves as a symbolic base for Frost's treatment of the themes of loneliness and despair.

In the first line of the second stanza, the poet states that the "woods," frequently a symbol of darkness and mystery in Frost's poetry, are now in possession of the field. "All animals," the only representatives of animate life outside of the poet, are hidden beneath the snow's cover. The verb "smothered" connotes both the isolating and lethal qualities of Frost's snow.

The next two lines make explicit a connection intimated in "Bereft." The dark falling "night" depicted in the first stanza is here portrayed as a pervading spirit of "loneliness." The forces of darkness which inhabit Frost's universe are forces of isolation which permeate not only nature but the individual. In the third line of the stanza, Frost alters the colloquial phrase "absent-minded" to "absent-spirited," cleverly evoking a sense of emotional or spiritual emptiness. The word "unawares" in the final line again indicates that the dark outside forces affect the individual insidiously and internally. The loneliness is not internally generated, but envelops an unsuspecting Frost.

The third stanza highlights Frost's utilization of poetic technique in supporting thematic content. The alliterative sibilant which is present throughout the poem as an aural personification both of the snow and the sinister forces of evil, is particularly emphasized in this stanza. The repetition of the words "lonely" and "loneliness," carried over from the last line of the second stanza, enforces its impression on the reader. The pause created by the dash seems to add a sense of authority to the prediction, explicit in the first two lines, of a growing loneliness.



Paul Hoppe

The final two lines of the stanza are reminiscent of Ishmael's explanation in *Moby Dick* of the enigmatic horror involved with "whiteness." Frost's snow is paradoxically "benighted." The snow's "expressionless" silence links Frost's dark cosmic forces with the quandry of human isolation. The silence, combined with the blank "whiteness," evokes the image of the fathomless "abyss of desperation" to which Viereck refers. The double "s" which ends the stanza sustains the image aurally, trailing off into the vertiginous, enveloping white.

The last stanza compresses Frost's notion of evil in the universe into an evocative interplay of images. The indefinite "they" and "their" in the first line seem to refer to astronomers, with the larger implication of science and empirical data. The inter-stellar spaces these men report, vast as they might be, are limited by the very fact that they are able to be estimated or charted, comprehended at least in mathematical formulae. The abyss Frost senses in and around him is all the more horrible for being humanly incomprehensible.

The first two lines have a second, indirect function. The cosmic setting they construct implicitly sets the forces of evil Frost depicts on an equally vast scale. Frost's conception of these forces now becomes analogous to the concept of an original and eternal Void, similar to the creative force of all darkness and evil in Hesiod's *Theogony*. This dark spirit pervades the entire universe and creates the individual's "desert places" of profound loneliness.

The last line almost shatters the validity of the abject and pervading pessimism which Frost conveys in the rest of the poem. The phrase "scare myself" implies that the poet's despair has been largely self-generated, and hence puts a more secure or comprehensible perspective on his dark horror. Yet it is doubtful that the last line is intended to, or actually does, form a facile contradiction to Frost's bleak vision. At most, it leaves the reader with the same sense of uneasy ambiguity in which "The Onset" ends. One almost senses that Frost wishes he were only "scaring himself," but is keenly aware that his despair is as dark and uncontrollable as the rest of the poem indicates.

*once more inside the changing season
comes and comes again the crazy dancing*

*the spasms of the spirit's last understanding
the fierce and final cry*

*crazed she dances until she runs dry
lies down and dies inside the trembling*

*knows that when she comes rigid inside the remembering
reason will give no reply*

*fierce she flies against the implacable ending
withers inside her own sparse fire*

*waits for the dance to extinguish the dread and desire
dries her dead eyes*

Linda Gebhard

*such a day as this is too wide for milwaukee
the city of our growing up together
waiting for innumerable buses
spinning and discarding songs;
wandering aimless on the avenue
i sense that april's air is finally sterile;
there remains neither healing nor home.*

*echoes of your questions blank out voices
when old friends wrench words;
they tell me of the streets that scrape your feet now,
the songs you breathe, the girls you make,
the freedom that so cruelly still eludes you;
i have travelled too since last you touched me;
politely, i have listened, even smiled.*

*to live the precious pain we dealt each other
i made a system of my contradictions;
i took to words and shadows, gin and tonic;
old friends and i, we mocked ironies.
but more and more the days spun too wide
until i found that i could smile no longer.
for you and me, freedom has not come easy;*

*we died inside our questions
while old friends lived their answers
and that has been a difference.*

Linda Gebhard

Last time

*she wasn't as beautiful as
before.
her hair untouched,
not as soft nor
her eyes as clear.*

*a slow and even speech
she gave me, and turning back,
i remembered
shussing leaves
where we laid as she
raped my mind.*

*she had bared her breasts
where we moved to view a
caterpillar on a limb
twist and spin a silken
web to protect
its future life.*

*and i remembered
her desire
to cut the strings
and it was Fall.*



Paul Hoppe

The Liberation

Explanatory note: Rathlin Island is a low, scrubby lump of Ireland about seven miles off the coast of Ulster. People have mentioned that it has had a bloody past spotted with invasions and occupations put across by a number of countries and tribes which, presumably, thought the island important for something. Nobody but its few inhabitants feel it very important for much of anything these days: there has been no fighting, and a great deal of quiet, for a very long time now.

*Oh, there's dirty business to be done
Before this night is o'er;
For when the cheery morning sun
Breaks on a dreadful battle won
And glitters down on everyone
Proud Rathlin will be free!*

- 1 *The moon was full, the tide was full
With brine foam and debris;
Great Rathlin lay in rolling mist
Across the tossing sea,
As Captain Charlie asked his men
"And is yon island free?"*
- 2 *"Now who will up and follow where
True faith and courage lead?
For yonder sleep our mighty foes,
A grim, bucolic breed
That live in darkness still and will
Not let themselves be freed."*
- 3 *There was a mutter in the ranks
Like sewers in the rain;
The rumour spread among the troops
"He's being an ass again,
And if he wants to soak his pants--
Our pleasure, his the pain.*
- 4 *The captain tore his wretched beard,
"Vile cowards! was his cry.
And with a mighty squeal ran he
Full-clothed to the sea,
And foaming waves swept round above
His curious gallantry.*

- 5 *But for a wond'rous moment there
Was silence on the shore;
The soldiers gazed across the spume--
Then broke out in a cheer.
The Captain's cap played on the surf,
His cap and nothing more!*
- 6 *The bellow perished in their throats;
A groan of discontent
Slipped out from every mouth about
And oaths intemperate:
For mingled with his comrades' jeers
The Captain's howl was blent:*
- 7 *"Ye yellow poltroons, glub glub glub
Come ye and lend a hand!
This wretched ocean stings like hell
My drawers are full of sand,
And there's a thing to reckon with
Among my trusty band."*
- 8 *At last he reached the sandy shore--
"Outnumbered!" Was his cry--
"Once more across the beach, dear friends,
And this time victory!
Although one man cannot prevail,
There's strength in unity!"*
- 9 *Again across the moonlit beach
He scrambled with a shout;
And once again the boiling waves
Got up and threw him out;
And as he struggled back again
Nobody thought to doubt*

*That
The sea had done its dirty bit
Beneath the starry sky.
The Captain had predicted it,
The waves had had the best of it,
And when the morning sun was lit
Old Rathlin still was free.*

Charles Strietelmeier

of Rathlin Island

THE POETRY

of Valparaiso University

asterisk *

L
I
G
H
R
P
E
T
R
Y



the literary-humor
NUMBER 1
the literary-feature magazine
MARCH, 1968
NOVEMBER, 1964

*

"A little old poetry, anyone?"

ETRYPOETRY

lighter

*

It is good to look back now and again – to see how you’ve changed and how you really haven’t.

So thinking, we went back to the old, library-bound Lighters for the poetry retrospective on the following pages. Our purpose was to find out about ourselves by discovering what the Lighter had been, how it had progressed, and what the poetry said, if anything, about the people inhabiting VU before us.

About the Lighter we found the following: It took off in 1958 as the Literary-Humor Quarterly, full of hilarity, Lighter Lovely “pin-ups,” and not much that could be called “fine art.” By ’67-’68 the Lighter had evolved into a literary magazine, and in ’68-’69 all hell broke loose and anything became possible: Lighters in all sizes and shapes, an all-pictorial issue entitled ate me, and a poster.

At the same time, of course, the campus was growing and the world was changing. Technology, the war, cities, the civil rights movement are all there in the poetry.

What did we find out about the people? They seem not to have changed very much at all. Through fifteen Lighter volumes students continued to find it important to share their reflections and perspectives with each other, and, though the poetry’s predominate tone or style may have varied from year to year, they continued, as we still do, to express similar concerns in certain kinds of poetry:

- introspective poetry
- poetry about the question of education
- nature poetry
- poetry about God
- poetry about the world and it’s prospects for survival
- poetry imitating poetic forms
- love poetry.

Judge the next few pages for yourself. Do they reflect a past whose preoccupations are already beyond our understanding, or is there still in these poems something of your own experience?

We boldly acknowledge that poetry in the amount included in this one issue may be difficult to swallow all at once. (We read fifteen year’s worth!) If you find it necessary, we recommend saving this retrospective from the wastebasket and returning to it on quiet evenings – you’ll enjoy it more that way.

Incidentally, we *have* discovered a moral here. Poetry may aspire but it cannot, after all, *be* life, as one chauvinist Lighter so succinctly put it:

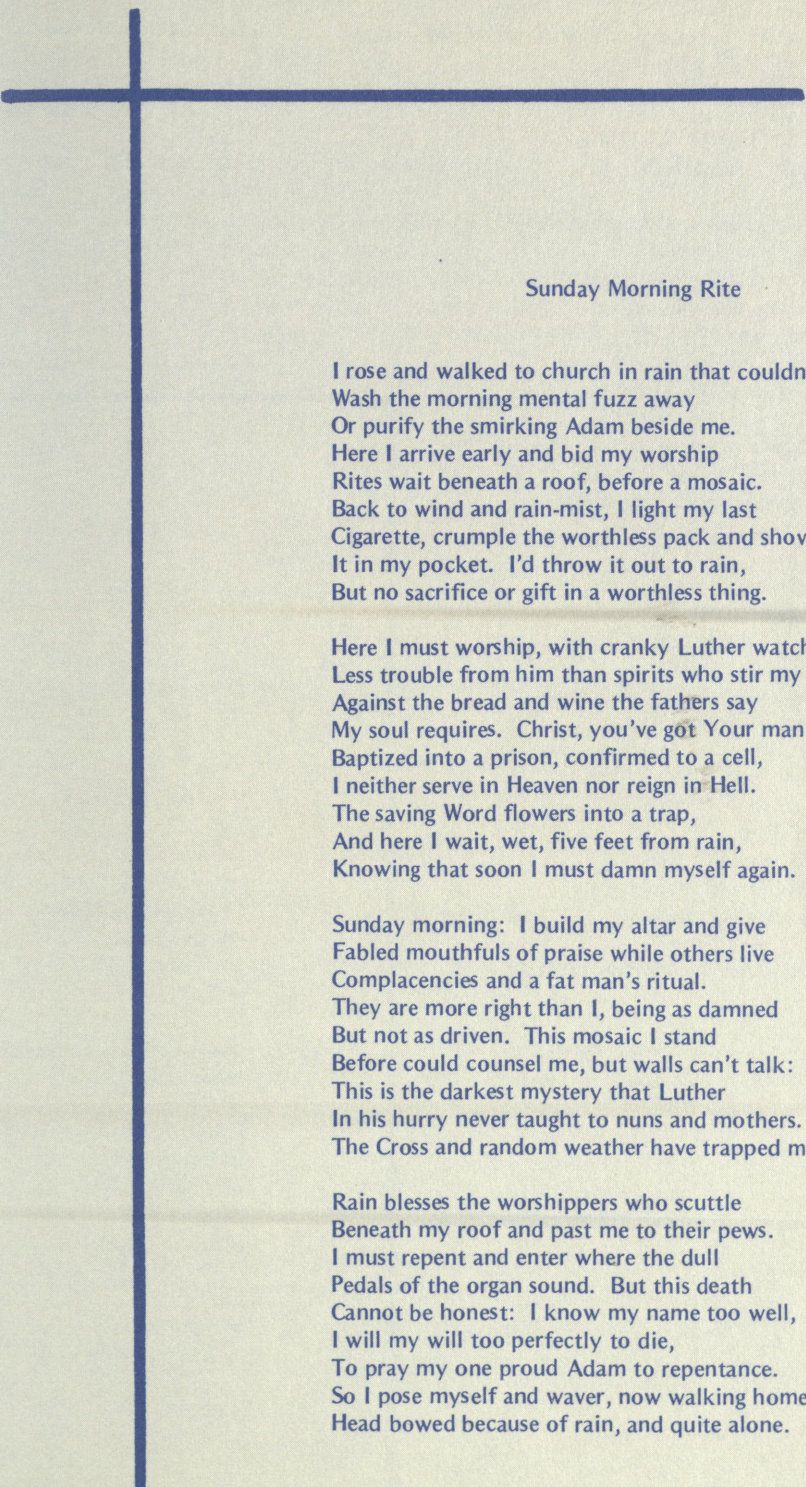
I think that I shall never see
 A poem lovely as a knee . . .
 Oh, well. Enjoy.

Karla

I think that I shall...

I think that I shall never see
A girl refuse a meal that's free,
A girl whose hungry eyes aren't fixed,
Upon a drink that's being mixed;
A girl who won't forever wear
A bunch of junk to match her hair;
A girl who looks at boys all day
And figures ways to make them pay.
Girls are loved by jerks like me
Cause who would want to kiss a tree.

May, 1959



Sunday Morning Rite

I rose and walked to church in rain that couldn't
Wash the morning mental fuzz away
Or purify the smirking Adam beside me.
Here I arrive early and bid my worship
Rites wait beneath a roof, before a mosaic.
Back to wind and rain-mist, I light my last
Cigarette, crumple the worthless pack and shove
It in my pocket. I'd throw it out to rain,
But no sacrifice or gift in a worthless thing.

Here I must worship, with cranky Luther watching.
Less trouble from him than spirits who stir my stomach
Against the bread and wine the fathers say
My soul requires. Christ, you've got Your man:
Baptized into a prison, confirmed to a cell,
I neither serve in Heaven nor reign in Hell.
The saving Word flowers into a trap,
And here I wait, wet, five feet from rain,
Knowing that soon I must damn myself again.

Sunday morning: I build my altar and give
Fabled mouthfuls of praise while others live
Complacencies and a fat man's ritual.
They are more right than I, being as damned
But not as driven. This mosaic I stand
Before could counsel me, but walls can't talk:
This is the darkest mystery that Luther
In his hurry never taught to nuns and mothers.
The Cross and random weather have trapped me here.

Rain blesses the worshippers who scuttle
Beneath my roof and past me to their pews.
I must repent and enter where the dull
Pedals of the organ sound. But this death
Cannot be honest: I know my name too well,
I will my will too perfectly to die,
To pray my one proud Adam to repentance.
So I pose myself and waver, now walking home,
Head bowed because of rain, and quite alone.

Laurence Michie
September, 1961

Renwick's at Princeton

Clean shaven and grinning —
(Cheer for an ancient school —
Sing and play
in green — grown
stone — hewn halls —)
Blood less
(of only the very best familys)
Beer drinkers—
(Having never tasted
brandy-in-the-morning)
When you spend the night
over your books,
was it to taste cooler
waters?
Do you write home to your
crystal palaces and tell your sterile
forbearers about the blood-
stained faces —
Or haven't you seen them?
Sugar — spun children —
Laugh in your librarys —
for soon the books will burn.
Make love under your green
trees between stone walks —
for soon you must go to the
cold empty cities —
Rest in these cotton — lined
cloisters
For soon you will fight
the sad-eyed dwellers of the concrete
labyrinths — for they read these books
and cried —
Shrove Tuesday — Ash Wednesday cometh.

Ke Ruse
Summer, 1961

no, I haven't tasted

no
i havent tasted many
things in life
and never
will

and
when i die
(if)
i wont know the half of it
or ten percent
or whatever precious
little
man can know

but
perhaps
he knows i knew, i dont know

thats enough

Mike Quam
Winter, 1961

Two Boys on Locust Street

As we sat on our porch one late afternoon,
Two small boys walked down the street,
In the way small boys do.

They eagerly accepted my offer of a cookie.

They were brothers and neither older than ten.
The younger wore the rags his older brother
Had cast away outgrown a few years ago.
Neither had a bicycle and their faces
Were already defeated and exhausted.

Their minds were not alert.
Their eyes sparkled but somehow
The sparkle was a sad one.
And will these children, and millions
Like them, ever find truth?
And will they recognize and keep it?

John Kachmarik
Summer, 1962

Can you Hear the Rumbling

Can you hear the rumbling?
Listen.
The earth itself is shaking loose
From reason, thought, and peace.
Hear them?
Our men are fighting over miles,
They strike our life to fire.
An island is our epitaph
The tool of our grave,
They'll kill us all to give us freedom.
Where is the world that war will save?
The taste of victory
Will be ashes in our mouth.

Geoff Stein
Spring, 1963

The City

Sounds
Surge violently,
Crashing over me —
A senseless tumult
Twisting me within its grasp,
Till

“I”
exists
no
more
among
the
ripple
marks
on
shores
of

“They.”
Erased from sight, the particles of “I”
Are scattered then drawn
From a broken “I”
Into the mass of
“They.”

Recede the tide;
Move back upon the shore,
With particles recaptured to form once more
The tiny ripples mid the countless on the beach;
A new inspection will admit them varied and the same
Each one as all consisting of a similar stuff
Uniquely shaped by waves of sounding life
That strike and form in each a lone,
Totality divided.

by Kathy Behrenbruch
Fall, 1963

Pieta:1964

dawn, and
Two bodies moldering in a vietnamese Jungle —
 a yank and a viet cong. between them a Lily grows, her
 Pungency mingling with their putrification:
 lacrimal dew dripping from her

Whiteness

 and.
 maternal leaves in morning coolness caress their
rotting Flesh. the Lily keeps a silent wake over
her children — (they are brothers of her

Seed).

 a vietnamese

 Pieta.

Steven Borchardt
November, 1964

Love is a bunch of pick-a-pack

Love is a bunch of pick-a-pack breakfast cereals:

 You try one kind and see if you like it,
But sometime or another you get tired of it,
 Then you try another kind
 and another . . .

 until
you've tried them all
 but then you try them

 a second time around,
 and maybe even a third.

And every once in a while a new one comes out,
so you try that one for a while —

 But then,
Some people like to sleep late — like me —
 and never bother getting up
 for breakfast.

Chere Peterson
March, 1965

A Proposition to mice, and men (?)

Ferret and ye shall find,
my little rodent, my little pet:
but be wary of the snap-traps i have set
(How i admire the quickness of your mind!)—

He who catches on shall not be caught
in poems, and riddles, sarcastic tripe of late;
being women, i am phallic-symbol bait
but (hopefully)inaccessible(methought) —

The man who never endeavors never wins
but be ye mouse or man i cannot tell:
(they say that animals don't go to hell
but man does, for his animated sins) —

God loves the lowest creatures, it is said —
and so i cannot say that i despise
that hungry look that haunts your beady eyes:
i understand; pets must be fed,
— but please go begging in another's bed.

Anonymous
November, 1965

It was one of those
four star
twenty-four carat
moonbeam loves
That died on the eighth on Yesterday
and will be forgotten
on the seventeenth of Tomorrow.

Joan Davis
November, 1965

fugue on redemption

central theme
running through
two Compositions

metre of love
in counterpoint to
our failings

rhythm of understanding
with
insistent repetition
of purpose

and finality of Action
in the cadence of
the cross
Echoing
through Time.

Steven Borchardt
February, 1966

(Thoughts from a hole)

There, that was the hole I told you about the other day
When you walked with me, remember? when we
Saw it, so beautifully deep and so brown
And so damp with the dirt piled by, and down
The inside the sides were smooth as the edge
Of a shovel and a man digging deep could reach.
You said to me after glancing just once
"Oh, yes, nice." And your eyes looked at me dancing
Around it laughing steps and I saw
In them reflected the bottom of the hole . . . you, so full
Of your thoughts, should be able to look for your soul
Inside you and not find the back or the walls
Or the bottom, all damp, dark and hopeful with all
That rich earth promising great things and green life
And maybe a large burst of riotous flowers that no scythe
Could cut . . . And when I'm inside, very, deep, deep
Down I could look up out to the sky and see
All the stars in a dark blue heaven, a sky of diamonds
Where we could travel and touch them and go around
The clusters and greet the gods walking in mythical states
Of nobility
That hole isn't there anymore, they filled it in
And I passed it this morning and sitting
On top of it was a mound of earth they had
Taken from it: they couldn't put all that
Earth back in; there was too much they
Had taken out; it must have been the
Flowers that grew when it was empty.

Kathe Carino
March, 1968

Pieta

Behold. And as a woman, black like me,
Stood.

Crying without shame into her
Dirty, yellowed cloth. Tied in her hand.
Tacked to her face. Draped in tranquil
Despair.

Her day was long. Her day. The day
Of deliverance and. Well, what did she
Expect?

A man is a man for all that.
A man is destroyed for all that.
A man is a man for all that.
A man is a man for all.
For all that a man is.
Is that all for a man?
Is that all a man is for?

For a shiny face. And a beard so poor that
Men of the councils are worried. And eyes
melting at every turn to something
Broken. To man.

For a weak gait. A slender waist. And wrists
of an artist.

For a sick stomach. And friends given to
fear of the Lord.

For myopic eyes. And feet weary from walking.
For a trick knee.

For this was I made man.
For you.

Do you recognize a part of yourself in me?

Fool!

Richard Oelschlaeger
March, 1968

Nancy Lieneck
September, 1969

me i remember your strong thick thighs
over me and the nights
bathroom weeping fear for the seed
within me wanting to grow and i so scared it would
rum cokes a prayer in bed mentholated shaving cream
your hand on my breast
remember that, for christ's sake
i remember you.

God Bless Janis Joplin.
Amen.

how many prayers
have you trapped
in those dangling beads
and how many saints will
come dancing through the clouds
when you pray
i have sung every hymn
and the half disjointed
notes still echo
in the rafters
and the sunlight fades
and creeps along the floor
toward the door
all that is left
in the empty church
is you and your beads

Val Doonican
Fall, 1968

fire sale,
the world is going out of business
do what you want
it doesn't matter
life is cheap
it's over

Anonymous
Fall, 1968

in Just —
 fall when the world is crud-
 luscious the little
 mathprofessor

Postulates big and wee

and sammyandpammy come
 running from drinking and
 premaritalsex and it's
 fall

when the world is puddle-muckerfull

the queer
 old professors hack grades
 far and wee
 and bettyandisbel come angry

from arguing God and existence and
 it's
 fall
 and

the
 whole godamn
 world sinks
 into ob-
 liv-
 ion. . .

r.w.roschke
 May, 1970

I thought that death came only once
 but I have died a hundred times
 and mourned that I could die
 (so young, I said
 so fair, so full of life
 and yet so dead)
 I stood beside the coffin of my days
 and wept to see me as I now must be
 forever frozen in a look of bastard peace
 (so calm, I said, so happy to be dead)
 and folded up my hands
 around a lily
 and smoothed my dress one final time
 and felt the pale coldness of my skin
 (how small she looks! how thin)
 and watched the clods of earth
 conceal my coffin
 and touched the tombstone one last time
 and watched the other mourners drift away
 (a fine day for a funeral)
 as I waited
 for another dying dawn.

Phyllis Root
 May, 1970

I wonder . . . will they know . . .
his blood runs cold like a frightened rabbit
through the friendless night
and warms alone the hour.
The second hand moves slowly
grabbing each black dot
tallying the ice cubes of his brain.
Somewhere in the frigidity
immersed, immobilized
the answer strives to signal
an end to floundering.
Ah . . . I think he has it. . . see how he starts and jumps
ecstatically from his stool
accenting inspiration with a clap –
a joyous smacking of his hands together –
in tune with his feet . . . like Zorba
dancing on the beach-head of his room.
What will they say this morning?
So unprepared are they for answers –
trim solutions from another such as he –
How I should like to be there
when he says “No” . . . and gently turns,
a trifle smugly on one heel,
to stake his birth-right to the sun.

Lois Reiner
May, 1971

against a whiteplaster ceiling flickering,
gilded mirror-glints singe

a face, green and bronze, twisted with
visions of the street
as the street could scarcely sympathize.
in the guttermud, pigeons and Jezebel gawk at the alley
sawdust trampled— in the ear and in the eye,
whatcha get is whatcha buy:
hope you're satisfied to last. Hurry
the time. Hurry
taxi grease and careen past, blindly the curb to scare
smudged vapors, serpentine around then, on, over
london bridge — is fallingdownfalling down falling
down
where red toy boats on Sunday sail
to songs of the swan.
Hurry the time — lighting of the lamps blears the sky
and, mocked on a window, fumes through a shutter,
lining idly behind where
hidden hands,
spiring on brine and heat,
grip and cringe
for metal point on bone to a
splintering noise:
now grinding dull: ebony hush.

Oooo plug him, plug 'im, plug 'im sirens boom,
while men and ladies, crowd, squirming to crush,
to see, da' da', the guy stretched out.

Rob Raddatz
December, 1971

it happens, cold,
on ghosts' grim night
dead things return —
steady; soundless,
we move, together,

we, moonmad.

it happens, hot,
dead things emerging,
decay converging —
final; formless,
we sink in saneness,

we suddensad.

it happens cold
our vacuums void us;
happens hot
our death enjoys us;
still we form visions,

we, godglad.

Linda Gebhard
December, 1972



Fragments for the Other Side of the Tracks

Tree by the Tracks
(Wordsworth vs. Williams)

The tree by the side of the railroad tracks
Was probably there on the day I was born.

It's opaque in summer.
Nothing is green without plenum,
And unguent inertia, asphyxiating

In November it's bare bones,
Anfractuous black
Brittle and breathing

The tree by the side of the railroad tracks
Will be there on the day I expire.

James R. Looman

*That the glass would melt in heat,
That the water would freeze in cold,
Shows that this object is merely a state,
One of many, between two poles. So,
In the metaphysical, there are these poles.*

*Here in the centre stands the glass. Light
Is the lion that comes down to drink. There
And in that state, the glass is a pool.
Ruddy are his eyes and ruddy are his claws
When light comes down to wet his frothy jaws*

*And in the water winding weeds move round.
And there and in another state — the refractions,
The metaphysica, the plastic parts of poems
Crash in the mind — But, fat Jocundus, worrying
About what stands here in the centre, not the glass,*

*But in the centre of our lives, this time, this day,
It is a state, this spring among the politicians
Playing cards. In a village of the indigenes,
One would still have to discover. Among the dogs
and dung,
One would continue to contend with one's ideas.*

Wallace Stevens

TEETERS ON STEVENS

TEETERS ON

Wallace Stevens' poem "The Glass of Water" is a metaphysical statement concerning the complex diverse fictions of reality, the function of the poem in modifying our present fictions, and the responsibility of the poet in creating new fictions. The poem works to interfuse different perceptual experiences and intuitive concepts into belief. As a poet, Stevens seeks truth through an imaginative unity of the subjective and objective world. This is achieved by the poet in the creative process of composing the poem, forcing in the reader empathy with the creative spirit.

At the outset, Stevens examines the glass of water in its normal physical state as a single unified object. The water is the substance or primary quality of the object, while the glass represents the contingent appearance of the object or secondary quality. The glass is an artificial, synthetic restructuring of the external elements of nature. The flux of this empirical world is symbolized by the melting of the glass. Heating the glass causes the

speed of the molecules to increase in velocity, strengthening Stevens' image of the endless change and fluidity of the external world. Water is a natural substance, and as such, is closer to the internal realm of primary actualities or the absolute. The freezing of water invokes the image of the arresting and rigidifying of molecular motion, approaching the ideal of permanence, order and consistency. The glass of water as an object is an arbitrary, transitional state between the two metaphysical poles of the subjective and objective, representative of the varying degrees of the following dualities: order and chaos, reality and appearance, and truth and falsehood.

In the second stanza, the glass is the imaginative center of attention of the perceiver as a poet. At this point, Stevens' imagery moves from the experiences of the ordinary percipient to the imagination of the gifted poet. Light, a symbol for truth, focuses on the lion. Not burdened by the restrictions and contradictions of rationality, the lion is in command of

his environment rather than submissive to it. Ruddy eyes, bloody claws, and frothy jaws are evidence of an intense existence. The joy of birth, the integrity of a struggle for survival, and the honor in killing just for food are essentially the sacraments of the lion's life. The glass as a pool reflects this red, rich, fullness of life and death in the lion's existence. For Stevens, this mirroring of the lion exemplifies an authentic relationship to reality.

The problem that each man faces in realizing and achieving a state of authenticity of being is the result of the contradictory demands imposed by his intellectual spirit and his body. Like the weeds in the water, bending both to the wind and the current, man must moderate between the universal or absolute as demanded by his intellectual spirit and the finite or empirical demands of his body. A further complication in choosing correctly is the confusion and distortion of man's vision caused by refraction. The illusory aspects of external appearances cause men to dissipate their energies in a misguided manner. Like the "plastic parts of poems," man and the poet often worry more about the way things look and sound rather than the way they really are. In the case of the poet, an emphasis on rhyme scheme and syllabification to the detriment of truth is fatal. In regard to the reader, one must learn to analyze and explicate beyond the words (the particulars) to the meaning (unity) of the poem. The tension between the universal and the finite, "Crash in the mind," as the poet's imaginative insight causes the poem to explode the reader's fictions like the shattering of the glass of water. The poem as a synthetic construction is comparable to the glass, while the insight and knowledge the reader can gain from it is, like water, its substance. In this sense, the poem becomes a didactic statement concerning man's incapability for correctly distinguishing between ends and means.

Typical of this description of mankind is *Jocundus*. Fat and

exhibiting none of the power and vitality of the lion, *Jocundus* could be characterized as a hedonist, as one who lives just for the pleasure of each moment. The contrast is striking. What was noble in regard to the lion is disgusting in respect to man. *Jocundus*, centering his worries on "this time, this day," confuses the empirical and bodily with ends, rather than realizing that the finite is a means to a higher end. The same is true of politicians who have the power to re-shape and restructure the environment, and who appropriately spend their lives, figuratively, playing cards. The playing of cards is symbolic of the pragmatic reshuffling and spring-like rebirth of the same elements of the external world. The arbitrary regrouping of the elements by the politicians into a new synthetic unit does not change the essence of the particular elements or of the reality of the thing-in-itself as a whole, only the visible configuration. Unlike the poet composing a poem, the shuffling of a deck of cards is merely the passing of time. The significance of cards in regard to honor and wealth exemplifies the illusive achievements of man in the realm of appearance.

ON THE RACK

καὶ τὰ πνεύματα λέγει ὅτι
Τὸ ἡμῶν βασανίσεις;

Comforter?

Comforter

perhaps,

*But most definitely a fire
that consumes in an agony*

*Of longing. Comforter
beneath the pain,*

*But always source of grief
at being's tension*

With becoming.

Trapped:

*In the hateful prison of the vascillating instant,
in the mocking cage, so deceivingly mobile,
binding us here, though here ever changes,
taking away even struggle's grim pleasure,
with no Valhalla, no Elysium destined,
Nirvana alone for the paralysed insects,
their one alternative the pain of becoming.
Where is being, where the final telos,
where a resting from this ceaseless motion?
Cruel elastic, adamant in its bending--
God, I am trapped,
caught in the snare,
bound into the moment,
frozen in time,
and yet time rushing
to a purposeless further;
I can no longer bear the joy
for fear the dreadful night must come.*



Ervin Dukatz

From the polluted bed
the cry comes

Ελωι

from the hand grasping
at the empty bottle
the cry

Ελωι

from the knife withdrawn,
dripping blood,

Ελωι

from the mind remembering permanence
when the second has devoured it,
from the heart remembering permanence
as the tyrant clock ticks,
from the soul smothered by the instant, remembering permanence
as being returns to focus,
from the point between the satiated desire
and the return to reason
comes
the cry.

Ελωι Ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι;

Domine miserere,
Domine iuva
vivientem in morte.

We know our predicament
because of you.

Child, have mercy, cut the tumor of inadequacy out.

Child, preserve us, *Χρίστε ἔλεησον.*

Friend, take pity, *Χρίστε ἔλεησον.*

I can no longer bear the joy
for fear the dreadful night must come.

Dave Townsend

Footnotes:

Epigraph: And the spirit said, "Why are you torturing us?"

Ελωι Ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

Domine miserere . . . : Lord, have mercy; help the living dead.

why, if i were a poet, i'd write anonymous poems

embarrassment mostly
hornrimmed philosophers blandly
asking what ticks, what's true.
each dying to see his own
eye, his own moldy toothbrush
scrubbing in black and white, sneaking
to get the cosmic gossip.
the amazing vegomatic
of the mind, slicing and dicing
common stuff (symbols to strangers)
to this and that, image and man,
plopping a sausage equal sign between.
scraggly students, getting a three-to-five-
page suffering of living metaphors out of the way,
smelling a beer somewhere.
(why does everyone know me but me?)
the sweat in my voice
smelling up thousands of pages and processes.
what a
dumb
name.

Dandelion Seed, One Remaining

Just you and me
Left,
Dandelion
Wisp.
Others blown or flown
Like fickle kites, fated to some
Marriage with the earth,
Some trivial, housewifely sputtering to dust trees.
You find your tarot, laid with care,
Awaits its turning.
If by fire or water,
If by the weight of raspy browns
Or slushy whites,
All will be quick.
Meager consolation,
Seeing your whipped back
Endure another wind.
Stupid leaves — pouting to
Covet your frail lace
And mourning their fiery dancing frocks!
Will they stay with you in the garlands
At the wall, seeing that partners are all
But chosen? Will they bake pastry
In a barren house?
Damned docile pillow,
Damned
Stingy
Stem.



Peter Schaefer

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(Exit Laughing)

laughter, laughter, laughter
all the night
and morning after.

laughter.

ten more minutes of laughter.

ten more nights
ten more days of laughter

And laughter,
laughter, laughter
Little After
l'after.

T. Lynn Wolfe

Lighter