

5. The Aftermath

Supermarket managers and
 pharmacists become the first
 civil libertarians: their
 shelves are clogged with Brecht,
 Vitalis, Brylcream, Head & Shoulders
 and the rest. Vending machines
 in gas stations' mens' rooms
 continue to dispense
 2-for-a-quarter prophylactics
 (for the prevention of disease
 only) at a brisk pace
 but haven't moved a comb in weeks.
 Perhaps we were too hasty,
 some are willing to suggest
 the barbers raise their prices back.
 The town relents. It's May
 and warming up. The kids have
 itchy growing hair but still come
 home too late. The parents don't
 protest too much: they're digging in
 for another long hot summer.

-- William Matthews

Aurora, New York

Reply to an Academic Dean

Dear Mr. Pinsker,

Saw your poem in College English and
 I enjoyed it very much. Hope to see
 more of them soon.

Sincerely,
 Kenneth O'Brien, Dean

So you'd like to see more of them soon...
 But do you think words spill on paper like concrete
 And harden quickly into poetic canons?
 (Good, I admit, for holding up administrations
 Or, in your case, blowing up a college reputation.)
 Sitting safely on your deanship
 (Keeping up with the contributor's notes)
 It must look easy to write more.
 But, to be honest, it's more like blood
 And every line that oozes out has its price.
 (I wonder if you are willing to go yours?)
 Perhaps we could both stand a transfusion --
 Each, in his way, putting the essentials back in
 circulation.

Hope to see more of you soon.