



To My

Good-bye, my friends. I leave you now.
I regret I cannot call you all by name,
But then you knew me but as that boy
Outside row, half way down,
Who took to education as a hen to water.
We never did get to know each other, did we?

You I shall remember.
When I was just a little boy
You willowed my mind
And I swung like a bird with a red breast on the tip of it.
The day was the night was the year
And I was the unfolding bud of spring
And every sweet minute of your love was the bloom of it.
I shall remember you.

And you.
I was twelve.
You whipped me with the lash of wonder,
Opened a heaven of freedom to my gasping mind.
In each half-hour with you the stars outshone the sunrise.
I shall remember you.

You, my friend, the third of three, I shall remember.
Just last year, it was—
Drugged with the miasma of words that schools exhale,
I stumbled into you.
You gave me first your arm of confidence to lean upon,
Then so quietly the antidote I hardly knew that I was waking up.
You listened.
Not just to me but to all of us.
Then, not soon, but soon enough,
The sludge that was our minds began to clear
And we could think.
I shall remember you.

Teachers



As for the rest of you, what shall I say?
I do not wish to hurt you
As some of you hurt me—
You, Miss So-and-So, we weren't big enough
To fault the pain
When the needle of your anger etched fear into our souls.
And Mr. What's-Your-Name,
How keen you thought that scalpel wit
With which you really scarred not our faces but your own.
You others? Well, we weren't really people to you, were we?
Just the furniture of school,
Slightly animated.
You painted on the varnish that you call education,
Coat after coat (but forgot the buffing)
Smeared on the wax to make the polish that you call culture—
Now you truck us off to the auction rooms of the economy and
the labor force
For sale to the highest bidder.
Shall I tell you about people?
Well, maybe not. I doubt if you would understand.
It's just that—damn it, I am me
And you never even saw the me that's I.
Would you see me now?
One quarter of my life's span spent
And here I stand, organically a man, but shapeless, somehow;
I purpose nothing. I value only me.
So I stand on the very horizon of my childhood,
I look into the horizon of my manhood.
Behind, the bleakness of the unfulfilled.
Ahead, so little between me and time.
Oh, I will find a job. I'll live. For what?

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