

THE FIRES OF HOME

Home is where the balanced mornings fall
Like orange and noiseless dominos beside
My father's bed. Piping like a flute
Upon the concert of his youth — he notes
My mother, a sober courtship in a timeless
Middlewestern town where Darwin and the patterns
Of Oak accustomed avenues prevail, where
Gloom and vanity are hauled to the curb
Before pedestrians and jailed like drunken drivers.

He grieves for the pale, defective child
Who spits out the cream and turns
Away from his father's hearth. "My son
Sits tuneless as shadows, feeding one
Hand to the other and eating his brain," he sighs.
I mutter how the snow drifts towards us
Over our lawns like the population of Asia,
He replies, "a burden but distant, bad
Manners and gone with the season, my son."

Before dawn I heard him call
"Come, come to me without a quarrel."
The cur that napped beside the grate
Howled like history at his door,
The strangled song which was my youth
Rose like a bird and flies away — Father,
When the moon burned like the fires of home
Were the hills warm with mortal desire?
Before history, were the trees startled
A deep green blush by the sun?

“You rave of dreams without design
You will not mourn for me,” he sighed.
Grinning the lazy wisdom of the aged
He kissed the hound that tore his throat,
“With my death I will you all
The Certainty there is,” my father said,
“Your son must follow his father’s wake
As the geese fly dangerously in spring
From winter toward no natural home.”

Grandin Conover