

With no sign of what we had achieved.  
We sat in our tents and thought  
It more than we should have to bear,  
Seeing the problems already solved,  
The distance come, and the distance  
We would have to travel  
To reach home.

10.

A few days later we decided to leave  
The entrance of the pass and make our way  
To a village some miles to the east.  
We had heard there was a shrine there,  
Similar to the one on the other side of the pass,  
But smaller, much smaller. After that  
We would begin our journey home.  
The destination made little difference;  
Our only wish was to leave  
The shadow of the mountain which pressed upon us,  
Reminded us of things better forgotten.

11.

Our journey home passed without incident,  
And we saw no person or thing that seemed  
Of significance. The people we did see,  
Natives and tribesmen, avoided us,  
As if we were the danger,  
Not the land itself.  
And finally, when we reached home,  
Nothing was changed. Buildings and people  
Were all as they had been before,  
While few knew that we had been gone,  
Knew of our troubles, or the difficulties  
We had passed through.

--- Stephen Dobyns

Iowa City, Iowa.

Orgy

Tommy's back yard smelled  
of grapes as I stepped off  
the cindered alley & crept  
through the log grass  
beside the garage

carefully

carefully, as the evening  
before I'd put down his beard  
in front of patricia, so he  
knew I was shooting on  
his candypants whore  
& he collected guns & only  
needed an excuse to Come  
with one to his shoulder &  
my scheming meat framing  
his .44 bore

the back screendoor squeak-  
ed & sung & a tic turned me  
halfway to run till I heard  
her sick starvingdog call ...

-- Hurry, Baby, Come! Tommy's  
gone for the day ...

each fated step was quick  
to the door as I reached  
for her sweaty red sunsuit  
& her eager wet smile

then Tommy stepped from  
behind the blind screen & I  
cursed the Time we were born  
in -- the wars that had trained  
us & the hate that we had  
as the hot highpowered slug  
dug deep in my belly & my  
last view of our Time was  
my wild final Come, mirrored  
slack-jawed & sleepy in the  
half-lidded eyes of Patricia  
& Tommy & the world as it  
died

6/65

just lately  
I've seen through it  
I've seen through it all  
once, you know  
I was quite religious  
but now  
there is nothing, nothing

yet still I pray

O Nothing, that  
which is Cipher, which  
is Naught