

BERRYMAN

1

A short distance between reality and
fantasy walking away from Maxim Gorky
but
if Henry had turned
with Mr. Bones
and gone off from Poesy's tower
(come down) he might not have fallen
onto the stones of Hades
fallen so far through the great
yawning chasm of chance --
and instead hung to the edge
clinging to the people.

2

Henry was of them
but John denied it
happy with self (alone)
though unhappy and he drew them in
his notes composing examinations
in the dark.
Henry was of the working poor
though poet
and he failed to see it
failed his own exams
time after time
did John.

3

"Let the new crit come
and break over us;
we shall be rocks"
sd Galway who saw B. at Princeton
the dark gate of a corpse --
he was drunk with study
but Galway knew by instinct
the earth road
the hard stones
and the plane saw
of labor. Though he too
saw the twist
of language in the Dream Songs
longing to shuck his self (B.)
for Henry.

4

That was the great fall all shuttering
so sick he missed the river
smashed instead on the dock
old dry bones
must have snapped --
(they were the killer kids
all intellect)
if he had met the ones from 1969 first
he might have come down
from the poetry tower
to join hands
with the people.

5

Now it is dark Henry
and we cry your memory
a bit -- the lank old man
all Anglo-Irish
straining to capture intellect
in a bottle: the brain
a specimen
but it doesn't work that way
anymore.
(the people cannot wait
for the sound of thought
while hunger gnaws the earth.)

PORTRAIT OF HENRY

Henry had been poor for a long time -- poor and sick and ugly and old -- he had always been old and he had always been poor. The ugliness came and went: at times when his eyes flashed he was beautiful and at times when he was angry he looked well. I knew him during the days when he was just getting a break, when the lovers of literature (as he called them) were starting to mention him with interest and respect and I liked him best then. He was not a legend yet, just a man.

He lived in a small, nondescript flat in Hollywood. There were two rooms and a kitchen, one water colour painting on the living room wall and a sign a friend had made from one of those plastic print machines whose words I forget.

We always brought the beer to Henry and sometimes we supplied him with good cigars. He was usually six to