

and you could tell that to her  
the most preposterous notion in the world  
was that she was destined for hellfire  
from having brought sexual happiness  
to her quiet, respectable, considerate,  
and very successful businessman husband.  
Not to mention having borne and raised  
his two strapping sons.

Indeed she was the first unabashedly sexual person  
I was to come in contact with.  
Turned early prudish by nuns and other Christian women,  
I was shocked to hear Bea  
send her husband off to the office  
with an admonition that he hurry home to her bed.  
She had one of the few fine bosoms  
on the Eastern Seaboard  
and was always all hugs and kisses for everyone.  
Trained as a nurse, she could heal a little boy's hurt,  
or a big boy's, lickety-split.  
She was what I guess you'd call a real woman  
at a time when the species was endangered.

I still get warm notes from Bea at Christmas.  
The protestant side of the family,  
to which I'd never been especially close,  
sort of unilaterally adopted me  
when I got divorced.

And Bea is always trying to get my mother  
to come visit her and Orv  
in the condominium to which they've retired in Florida.  
But Bea makes my mother nervous;  
Bea always made my mother nervous.

#### DECADENT

-- with nods to r. gilman and c. stetler

he was not even bestial.  
he preferred billy graham to baudelaire.  
when rome fell to migrating herds of bison,  
he was up as usual, bright and early,  
chanting matins.  
oscar wilde could have recited his entire  
repertoire of wit  
before our hero could complete  
a sentence without a cliché.

lionel johnson was a better christian;  
ernest dowson had better taste in women.  
on his tour of germany he found  
the attire of the storm troopers  
more conducive to the public morals  
than marlene dietrich's stockings.  
the list of things by which he currently  
feels threatened ranges from roller skates  
to toga parties.

he continues to contribute,  
with conspicuously ineluctable success,  
to the decay of language.

#### ANGLO-FRENCH INGENUITY

I intend to concoct a cereal out of mushrooms  
and to advertise it as "Breakfast of  
Champignons."

#### FATHER OF LIES

i'm taking my daughter to get a passport  
and i ask her if it will be a hassle  
should she be late getting back to school.

"oh no," she says, "the last time i was late  
i just said that there'd been an accident  
at a corner where i was crossing the street  
and that i'd had to make a police report."

"how in the world did you think of that?"  
i ask her.

"oh, i heard one of the mothers  
at the pre-school say that once,  
so i knew it would work."

now i know my daughter is not a pathological liar,  
and i know she doesn't even like to miss school.  
i know that she takes a little more after her mother  
than after me in regard to fibs.  
i'll lie if i have to,  
but her mother positively enjoys  
putting people on.