

## EMERITUS

seventeen years ago  
when i first arrived on campus  
there was this guy who was already  
one of the most popular and respected professors.  
he had the flair for teaching  
but he was also way ahead of his time  
in anticipating the role film  
would come to play in education.  
he was developing courses in film  
long before the time would arrive  
when only courses with film in the title  
would attract the required enrollment.  
he always kept a cork-board outside his office  
with the week's clippings of cinema reviews and ratings.  
i always made a point of perusing it myself.

then he had a stroke.

it took him two years to learn  
a new way of talking.

when he returned to teaching  
it took less than a year  
before the students  
(he was difficult to listen to)  
bitched him into retirement.

## THE 366th DAY OF THE YEAR

i love my children  
and i love my wife,  
who does not believe that i love her.  
i even love our cramped one-bedroom beach flat,  
with so many of us so close amidst the avalanche  
of books and toys and bills.

but unrelieved proximity breeds nervous and  
communicative breakdowns, so i don't regret  
this saturday with everyone else at the in-laws.  
i don't trip on the way to the typewriter.  
i can read or answer letters  
without driving to the office.  
eat without sharing.  
call a confidant.  
nap on the couch.  
not stand in line for the bathroom.  
watch a ballgame without feeling guilty.



hear no voices.

god, don't mistake this as a prayer for loneliness  
or worst of all, loss of loved ones.  
i always want my family to come home to.  
i want them to come home to me tonight.

but these few hours of october light,  
i stretch, inhale, take pen in hand.

### APRÈS LE MÉTRO DERNIER

Who would you have been  
during the Nazi occupation of France?  
It's a question I would like to ask  
of all my friends  
and all my (blush) fellow Americans,  
and one I often ask myself.

I'll answer it first, for myself.  
I would hope that I would do  
everything within my power to aid the Jews  
and other unfortunates  
and to bring about the downfall  
of the tyrants.  
But I know I might be arrested  
before I had a chance to do anything  
simply for being a teacher and a writer  
and outspoken,  
although not, I hope, a spouter of party lines.  
And I would have serious vulnerabilities,  
such as my children,  
not to mention my dislike of pain,  
which could be used to make me crack.  
Other things that would work against me  
would be my affinity for booze,  
my lack of experience with prisons,  
my fear of humiliation,  
my lack of martial skills,  
and my distrust of all politics,  
even my own.

So I know I could behave  
as a coward and a scoundrel.  
My best chance of not doing so  
would rest in my commitment not to waste  
the only life I have.