

"WHY," THEY ASKED SIR EDMUND HILLARY, "DID YOU WANT TO SCALE MONS VENERIS?"

"you're over the hill," my little girl says to her mother and me.

"i may be," i say, "but your mother isn't."

"oh yes," she says, "she's over forty too, and once you're over forty, you're over the hill."

to her, at ten, it is a comforting idea.  
it makes us much less formidable obstacles  
to her beeline for independence.

i felt the same way at her age.

and later i received the literary confirmation  
that fitzgerald and faulkner were over  
the hill by forty, and that wolfe and dylan  
thomas were both under it.

i'll avoid naming a girl i know who would  
like to skip her twenties and thirties  
entirely and dominate the field of the forty-  
year-olds, or so she says.

if she stays  
alive, she will.

WALT KUHN'S GOURDS, 1937

pondering this remarkable still life,  
i ask myself if i could write a poem,  
without the imposition of whimsy, narrative,  
symbolism or the pathetic fallacy,  
about a centerpiece of squashes.

then, remembering that there are  
thousands of poets out there looking  
for something to write about,

i bequeath them this vie morte,  
and head for the corner bar.

— Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA