

and terrifying "secret weapon." On the other hand, given what we *do* know, or have learned from our anthropologists and sociologists about this people, it may well be nothing more than a *mimem*, or a great altar recently erected to one of their gods, to which, in their present historical state of superstition and helplessness, they attribute magical powers, and may even regard as a "savior," one last hope of rescue from their grave difficulties.

At last! One of the elusive natives has been spotted! He appears to be—rather, to have been—a unicyclist-courier, who may have met his end by falling from the height of the escarpment because of the deceptive illumination. Alive, he would have been small, but undoubtedly proud and erect, with the thick, bristling black hair typical of the indigenes.

*typewriter  
eraser*

From our superior vantage point, we can clearly see into a sort of dugout, possibly a shell crater, a "nest" of soldiers. They lie heaped together, wearing the camouflage "battle dress" intended for "winter warfare." They are in hideously contorted positions, all dead. We can make out at least eight bodies. These uniforms were designed to be used in guerrilla warfare on the country's one snow-covered mountain peak. The fact that these poor soldiers are wearing them *here*, on the plain, gives further proof, if proof were necessary, either of the childishness and hopeless impracticality of this inscrutable people, our opponents, or of the sad corruption of their leaders.

*ashtray*

### Poem

About the size of an old-style dollar bill,  
American or Canadian,  
mostly the same whites, gray greens, and steel grays  
—this little painting (a sketch for a larger one?)

has never earned any money in its life.  
Useless and free, it has spent seventy years  
as a minor family relic  
handed along collaterally to owners  
who looked at it sometimes, or didn't bother to.

It must be Nova Scotia; only there  
does one see gabled wooden houses  
painted that awful shade of brown.  
The other houses, the bits that show, are white.  
Elm trees, low hills, a thin church steeple  
—that gray-blue wisp—or is it? In the foreground  
a water meadow with some tiny cows,  
two brushstrokes each, but confidently cows;  
two minuscule white geese in the blue water,  
back-to-back, feeding, and a slanting stick.  
Up closer, a wild iris, white and yellow,  
fresh-squiggled from the tube.  
The air is fresh and cold; cold early spring  
clear as gray glass; a half inch of blue sky  
below the steel-gray storm clouds.  
(They were the artist's specialty.)  
A specklike bird is flying to the left.  
Or is it a flyspeck looking like a bird?

Heavens, I recognize the place, I know it!  
It's behind—I can almost remember the farmer's name.  
His barn backed on that meadow. There it is,  
titanium white, one dab. The hint of steeple,  
filaments of brush-hairs, barely there,  
must be the Presbyterian church.  
Would that be Miss Gillespie's house?  
Those particular geese and cows  
are naturally before my time.

A sketch done in an hour, "in one breath,"  
once taken from a trunk and handed over.  
*Would you like this? I'll probably never  
have room to hang these things again.*  
*Your Uncle George, no, mine, my Uncle George,*

*he'd be your great-uncle, left them all with Mother when he went back to England. You know, he was quite famous, an R.A. . . .*

I never knew him. We both knew this place, apparently, this literal small backwater, looked at it long enough to memorize it, our years apart. How strange. And it's still loved, or its memory is (it must have changed a lot). Our visions coincided—"visions" is too serious a word—our looks, two looks: art "copying from life" and life itself, life and the memory of it so compressed they've turned into each other. Which is which? Life and the memory of it cramped, dim, on a piece of Bristol board, dim, but how live, how touching in detail—the little that we get for free, the little of our earthly trust. Not much. About the size of our abidance along with theirs: the munching cows, the iris, crisp and shivering, the water still standing from spring freshets, the yet-to-be-dismantled elms, the geese.

### *One Art*

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

### *The End of March*

*For John Malcolm Brinnin and Bill Read: Duxbury*

It was cold and windy, scarcely the day  
to take a walk on that long beach.  
Everything was withdrawn as far as possible,  
indrawn: the tide far out, the ocean shrunken,  
seabirds in ones or twos.  
The rackets, icy, offshore wind  
numbered our faces on one side;  
disrupted the formation  
of a lone flight of Canada geese;  
and blew back the low, inaudible rollers  
in upright, steely mist.

The sky was darker than the water  
—*it* was the color of mutton-fat jade.  
Along the wet sand, in rubber boots, we followed  
a track of big dog-prints (so big  
they were more like lion-prints). Then we came on  
lengths and lengths, endless, of wet white string,  
looping up to the tide-line, down to the water,  
over and over. Finally, they did end:  
a thick white snarl, man-size, awash,