QRL

POETRY SERIES

MANUSCRIPT SUBMITTING GUIDELINES: Manuscripts should be sent for reading during the months of *October* and *May*. The collection need not be a first book. It should be between 50 and 80 pages if it is a group of connected poems, a selection of miscellaneous poems, a poetic play, a work of poetry translation, or it can be a single long poem of more than 30 pages. Some of the poems may have had previous magazine publication. Manuscripts in English or translated into English are also invited from outside the U.S.A. Only one manuscript may be submitted per reading period and must include a SASE. Because of the success of the Poetry Series, QRL is able to announce the Betty Colladay Awards, which will increase to $1000 the payment for each manuscript chosen for the next poetry volume. The editors are grateful for the enthusiasm of all of those who entered into the support of the Series. They continue to request that each manuscript submitted be accompanied by a subscription to the series.

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POETRY SERIES

40th Anniversary Issue

QRL

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POETRY SERIES

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Stefan Hirsch, one of the most distinguished teachers of painting in his time at Bennington College and Bard College and a master craftsman in his own work, left at his death in 1964 paintings which are gradually receiving the recognition they deserve. We are grateful to his wife, the artist Elsa Rogo, for this issue's cover, a lithograph from his collection which reflects his absorption in city-scapes.

BIOGRAPHICAL CREDITS: Theodore Baird: *Amherst Graduate Quarterly*, 1948: "A Young American Poet at Amherst." James Hayford: *Amherst Alumni Quarterly*, Winter 1962. Richard D. Morris: *Encyclopedia of American History*, 1970. Nevins and Commager: *America—The Story of a Free People*, 1967. *New York Times*, 1913-1946.

David Schubert

WORKS AND DAYS

A poet whom even the furies
could neither diminish nor corrupt
—Ben Belitt

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Devised by Renée Karol Weiss

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LETTERS from Judith Schubert Kranes to Julius Bloom, Theodore Weiss, and M.D. Zabel
LETTERS to Judith Schubert Kranes from Ben Belitt, Louise Bogan, Peak Crawford, Murray Schubert, Heinrich Schults, Eda Lou Walton, Theodore Weiss, and M.D. Zabel
EXCERPTS from articles or books by Ben Belitt, M.D. Zabel, Harry Levin, Archibald MacLeish, Kerker Quinn, W.C. Williams, Karen Horney, Louise Bogan, Edmund Wilson, Eda Lou Walton
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Introduction

To celebrate *QRL*'s 40th anniversary we publish this volume. It focuses on one important aspect of what *QRL* has always stood for: a stressing of the past as well as of the present, the reprinting of work insufficiently acknowledged in its own time. So we present the poet David Schubert by way of all his extant work. Encouraged by the possession of a set of letters from Schubert to Ben Belitt, which reveal a good deal of Schubert's thought, wit, and acumen, I composed the biography that follows his collection of poems. To reinforce and clarify his work further, we collected articles by a group of distinguished poets and critics.

"Poets must sometimes look at themselves in order to remember what they are risking." That statement by David Schubert, in spite of his objections to personal disclosures, persuaded me to proceed with the biography. Had luck dealt Schubert a kinder hand, had he survived as well—or, more accurately, as long—as Lowell or Berryman or Schwartz, his contemporaries, he would have had time, not only to produce a much larger body of work, but to attract the kind of attention it deserved. Whether that recognition would have assuaged the destructiveness in his personality any more than it did the destructiveness in those other poets is something we can only speculate about. This compilation, with Schubert's help, this multi-auto-biography, aims at alerting the reader to the poems. What follows locates them in a time, a place, a person.

The biography is partly spun out of Schubert's own words: from his letters to friends, poets, editors. Not only the witty, playful, fantastical and the melancholy, sad, moving, appear here, but also the critical and the literary, insights into the thinking of Schubert that were the soil from which the poems sprang.

Because these letters seemed to require a context, I decided to include more material. Schubert's early poems,

apprenticeship work, found their place. They show him as he developed, as he reworked his material toward compression and quintessence. Most of these poems he put together and dedicated to Robert Frost. They did not find a publisher and Schubert later abandoned them or incorporated parts of them into later poems.

I also soon felt it pertinent to weave around Schubert's letters and the early poems the recollections of friends and relatives. Now almost 40 years later, these statements—gathered in interviews, on tapes, through telephone conversations, and through written correspondence (and dated, for convenience, 1980)—help to disclose Schubert's life and nature. Sometimes these recollections are faltering and vague, sometimes they are amazingly precise, and sometimes, though precise, they are extremely partial and even incorrect when juxtaposed against letters of the time.

It is with purpose that these inconsistencies remain. All have their own kind of truth. Inevitably, in the jostle of time and the unconscious need to heal terrible wounds, memory tells its own story (as much about the teller as the told). The past is not necessarily the final arbiter of what might be the truth. Furthermore, a description at the moment of occurrence often cannot include or understand the larger intent of the incident, cannot even see the conflicting details.

Each of the recollectors speaks for himself. Theodore Baird's and James Hayford's remarks appeared as memoirs in Amherst College magazines. Judith Schubert Kranes, wife of David, who inevitably plays a major role in this biography, has written, with honesty, objectivity and generous enthusiasm, her memories at length and filled in bits of information through every means of communication available. Her recollections help stitch together and often explain many of the discrete elements. Still, the drama of memory lies in how it sifts, excludes, justifies, faces what it finally remembers, and the way it sees others as well as the way it sees itself. Although she knew some of

the pieces, Judith Kranes did not have access to much of this material while she wrote her recollections, and Theodore Weiss did not read his letters or this manuscript until the very end. Thus it is interesting to compare Judith Kranes' detailed memory with the lack of it in both Ben Belitt and Theodore Weiss. The latter remember intensities and excitements but few details.

In trying to find information for Theodore Weiss's memoir, a lucky event occurred. Searching *QRL*'s files for letters from 1941 to 1944, I soon discovered that we did not keep letters before the *QRL* files began—in 1943. Only in a sudden, desperate flash of memory did I recall a batch of letters I had put aside 40 years before, daily letters that Ted had written to me during the time he spent in New York at graduate school while I was still in Pennsylvania. These letters, I thought, might contain references to the Schuberts. Little did I suspect that they would present a full and relevant account.

We also had the good fortune of turning up a file of Zabel letters which included Schubert's last letters as well as those by Judith Schubert. As is evident from the Zabel letters, though Schubert's story was an anguished and desperate one, the concern others had for him, the lengths they went to on his behalf, raises that story beyond the merely desperate and personal. Not only was Zabel selflessly involved, but to a lesser extent writers like Louise Bogan and Eda Lou Walton; and also friends like Herman Greenberg, Peak Crawford, and Theodore Weiss. It was Weiss's sustained involvement that produced this latest edition.

As the biography progressed, clearly some sense of the world going on around Schubert needed to be presented, for these were terrible years. Though Schubert was essentially a personal poet, the rumbles and clashes that made up the political and social scene certainly influenced Schubert's spirit. Through news headlines and quotations from articles, both literary and psychological, interjected at crucial moments of the ongoing biography, it was

possible to suggest some of the pressures being exerted from the outside and to weigh them against the internal depressions and frustrations welling up within. As the letters and memoirs show, arguments emerged regarding heredity versus environment, political involvement versus personal, the esthetical versus the practical: nagging polemical questions concerning choice: of parents, of nation, of income, and even of one's own nature. These arguments occupied Schubert from his first thinking days to the end.

Always, however, in the foreground of Schubert's mind was his absorption in his poetry, an absorption that usually was all-consuming. In an attempt to maintain that poetry flowing through the biography, even as it flowed through the life, bracketed verses from the collected poems appear throughout the pages. These are the poems being worked on or thought about at particular times, lines humming in Schubert's head, lines developing from particular situations.

I wanted the biography to resemble as much as possible the volatility and drama that is a life, its elements converging, contradicting, exploring. I also wanted to undertake the "risk"not only of presenting the "human scene, its incurably acute melancholia redeemed only by affection," but of balancing that melancholia with the drollery, tenderness, and poignancy abundantly present in that scene.

I hope that, whatever enlightenment the biography has brought to the poems (precursors to much that has been going on these last several decades), they help to establish Schubert's rightful place in the poetic world. And since it is the poems that principally matter, may they emerge from this exploration even more mysterious, mercurial, magical.

Renée Karol Weiss

POEMS

A Short Essay On Poetry

A poet who observes his own poetry ends up, in spite of it, by finding nothing to observe, just as a man who pays too much attention to the way he walks, finds his legs walking off from under him. Nevertheless, poets must sometimes look at themselves in order to remember what they are risking. What I see as poetry is a sample of the human scene, its incurably acute melancholia redeemed only by affection. This sample of endurance is innocent and gay: the music of the vowel and consonant is the happy-go-lucky echo of time itself. Without this music there is simply no poem. It borrows further gayety by contrast with the burden it carries—for this exquisite lilt, this dance of sound, must be married to a responsible intelligence before there can occur the poem. Naturally, they are one: meanings and music, metaphor and thought. In the course of poetry's career, perhaps new awarenesses are discovered, really new awarenesses and not verbal combinations brought together in any old way. This rather unimportant novelty is sometimes a play of possibility and sometimes a genuinely new insight: like *Tristram Shandy*, they add something to this Fragment of Life.

David Schubert, 1941, Introduction to *Five Young American Poets*, New Directions.

Part I

Kind Valentine

She hugs a white rose to her heart—
The petals flare—in her breath blown;
She'll catch the fruit on her death day—
The flower rooted in the bone.
The face at evening comes for love;
Reeds in the river meet below.
She sleeps small child, her face a tear;
The dream comes in with stars to go
Into the window, feigning snow.
This is the book that no one knows.
The paper wall holds mythic oaks,
Behind the oaks a castle grows.
Over the door, and over her
(She dies! she wakes!) the steeds gallop.
The child stirs, hits the dumb air, weeps,
Afraid of night's long loving-cup.

Into yourself, live, Joanne!
And count the buttons—how they run
To doctor, red chief, lady's man!
Most softly pass, on the stairs down,
The stranger in your evening gown.
Hearing white, inside your grief,
An insane laughter up the roof.
O little wind, come in with dawn—
It is your shadow on the lawn.

Break the pot! and let carnations—
Smell them! they're the very first.
Break the sky and let come magic
Rain! Let earth come pseudo-tragic
Roses—blossom, unrehearsed.

Head, break! is broken. Dream, so small,
Come in to her. O little child,
Dance on squills where the winds run wild.

The candles rise in the warm night
Back and forth, the tide is bright.
Slowly, slowly, the waves retreat
Under her wish and under feet.
And over tight breath, tighter eyes,
The mirror ebbs, it ebbs and flows.
And the intern, the driver, speed
To gangrene! But—who knows—suppose
He was beside her! Please, star-bright,
First I see, while in the night
A soft-voiced, like a tear, guitar—
It calls a palm coast from afar.
And oh, so far the stars were there
For him to hang upon her hair
Like the white rose he gave, white hot,
While the low sobbing band—it wept
Violets and forget-me-nots.

When Apples on the Lilac

BRASS BAND! PEASANT DANCES! EXHIBITION BOXING!
INDIAN BUDGING! FISH POND! BALLOON MAN!
CLOWN! A COCOANUT SHY! HORSESHOE PITCHING!
ARCHERY! HIT THE MARK—WIN A PRIZE!

MAGICIAN! CHARLIE CHAPLIN MOVIES!
FORTUNE TELLER! FLOWERS AND PLANTS FOR SALE!
BRING THE CHILDREN IN THE AFTERNOON!
BRING YOURSELF IN THE EVENING!
DANCE WITH FRIENDS IN THE EVENING!
WITH THE TRUNKLESS MAN IN THE MOON!
SEDUCTIVE TUNES! IRRESISTIBLE ORCHESTRA! SAIL
FOR THE BALI ISLES IN A DINNER PAIL!
ADULTS 50 CENTS, 25 CENTS CHILDREN!
FREE DIRECTIONS FOR THE LONESOME PINE TRAIL!

The factory whistle blew and I remembered
The tent pitched in the vacant lot where I
Crept Saturdays to watch the Baptist Revival
And saw the Preacher knock the Devil out
While the tent leaped in the moon like a silver trout.
Outside the hoky poky man chipped ice
And while the voices droned like flies
With bottles full of hair tonic he placed
The colors all around. I hugged my slice
Of water and I saw where Gabriel (dressed
In corduroy) laced Mrs. Johnson's shoes.

The organ grinder with the parrot used to come
Out of a child's ear. We heard him blocks away.
Before the box began we knew the play.
His organ box had a sign, "Hearts mended here!"

Two hearts were intertwined in crayon. The parrot
Picked the pennies from our fingers and like
A tragedian gravely dropped them in a cup.
They tinkled a moment—were still—
And all the music was gathered for the till
Except the scattered chords we used to whistle.

O Mr. Medium Man—Italian—hurdy gurdy man—
Your little box spilt heaven and the parrot
Told fortunes on small name cards.
We all grew up to be President in the White House,
Preferably though, in a Log Cabin or—
Best of all—an aviator
On a fire net. Where is the nickel garret
We entered and could stroke Polly parrot?
A Ford sedan explored original skies—
The paper airplane sinks, freighted with lies—
The long ears of a child a jackass' ears—
Why does your face, Van, change to another's?

And Jesus leaning on a hydrant in the noon
On the lame street where the men stood
Into the moon, into back office doors—
Upon the air he watched their faces die,
Or sprawling on the windows like glass flies.
And pity like an adolescent cries
—Crossing the street—self-conscious awkward tears
For love! ... Love that moved the stars
Begs at the corner and a hag's face wears.

Intersection

Mr. Riscica in his undershirt
Sits on a kitchen chair and puffs a corn cob. He
Swings his feet on the curb. No place to
Go. Nothing to do. Behind the water tank on stilts
The whistle blew, ages ago. Out of the butter tub
The ailanthus tree turns with the turning sun.
Out of pine out of loams out of air
The wild geese flying! Look. See there?
Open the surface opening your eyes. Take care.
Giddyap, Rosinante, giddyap old scarecrow,
Poor nag—his bones sticking through.

Voices in the air. Autos wheel by with
People dancing there. She is looking for her husband
Who is sleeping on the subway or a park bench. As
You look, a man with a basket, old man
Wrinkled as a prune. In the basket at his feet
Are gladiolas, anthers veined. If you give him ten dollars

The rags and bones laid out for awakening—new leg
Struts down the street at the corner of
Little Street and United States Street.

Crooked Road Crooked Year

Only the sand against the windows, only
The smoke rushing through the night,
And your face gone out in the plush light,
And the streets, the street lamps guttering.
Here the pine that held the blue sky
And the willows carved with initials, heart and hair,
They drift to transient harbors, drift
Waxing and waning where farm wives shift—
On porches strewn with morning glories—
Their gingham dresses while the new moon lifts;
They shift and turn and shuffle up the stair.

As deaf mutes—all passion at their finger tips,
Their fingers an abstraction of the blood—
Your eyes, precision instruments, passed
Out of the train into the country
Of picture postcard skies where a man was walking
Into the trees and two boys fishing for minnows.
Upon the tracks amid the flying country
Only a woman running, only the street
That solves the stars, only the muffled beat
Of drums, of water falling;
The evening running and—O drums rolling
Orion, Orion, Orion!

In the distance the rails bisect a town,
First the framehouses—then a factory.
A man was shivering. Here is the street. See,
The harbor dips to his knees and the sky of dawn
Is swinging as a fog is swinging bells.
The oak leaf flies. We are drifting. Here,
Is bat hair, owl glare, shells and Jack o'Lantern's fear.

Where a tear is the only light the train
Drives forward, lanterns swinging; where
Perhaps a singing school the night, perhaps
Rainbows from oil pools in newsboys' early eyes.
Perhaps breath colored was the wind, perhaps
The trembling star of our spoilt holidays
Calling the hands to supper, cow bell tinkling
In what far valleys green? From a lagoon
A phonograph is playing; canoers throng
Out of division—meet the hands, touch hands!
The lips an aerial lust. And the road, tortured in strife,
Heals. They love each other and the ghost—
The singer lives in the song, come back to life.

A public park is traveling past the train,
Past spring and jonquils the straw hats are borne—
They are walking over spring, pathetic and forlorn.
The street sign says *Dead End.* Here
No progress for the admiral where nurses,
Nurses and sparrows chitter in his ear.
The Admiral of the Park calls to his friends
Strange and remote, remote; yawns once,
And pulls his granite coat about his neck.

And somewhere is a player piano throbbing
Or with a child's mechanics thumps a dance,
Pedals *My Rosary*, or *Hearts and Flowers*,
O Promise Me to ditch men and mill hands.
In parlors of cloth roses and hair divans
The air is sweet and heavy with the romance
Of Indian maidens—Sunday in starched wood lands.
And here an alley cat is screaming, sobs
Past alleys and back fences;
And now an organ grinder brings out of the ashes
Roses and pretenses.

The train is racing past, the lonely miles
Are shunted at grade crossings. Still and black,
O still and lustre-lack and stiller, stiller—
The tail light now and now the night collapse.

Lighthouse Mission

For men like this there is the sound
Of feet forever drawing near,
Withdrawing in the ground.

After the rain like leaves blown
Tissue paper, damp, discolored;
They fall from a tree of air, sown
By some peasant, centuries lowered.

It means always, "Move, move on!"
They rise and creep below,
Above, under, on—
Never face the sun.

Snow
Means charity as this Lighthouse floats,
Anchors the angels. Paper sown
Between their skins and thin coats
To keep them warm.

War and hand grenades are
Listening at the corners, noon.
All night they hugged the hungry bone,
And sealed the lips and broke the stars.

Gold Chariot

Lift anchor! Four leaf clover and the rainbow
Sailing across the Atlantic to the Americas.
The cross bled deep roots to gather the land—
Salt release—lifting rock, lifting seas.

Then they saw the gulls, birds and the gods,
On the street post a wilderness fell.
The oak stretched into the gambrel roof
And bird of passage on the Indian coverlet.

Dark continent! The bell in the cathedral
Poked out its tongue, said "9, and all is well,"
And slept forever. Plunging one name,
The house leaped and fell. Smoky windows, sumac, lichen,
moss: all the same.

The madonna's smile froze to marble;
Step by step and face to face the hammer
Driving forward and on: bloodroot, new mown hay,
Arrowhead, maiden fern, cattail,
Silver fox in the trap next day.

The sword was topped by a cross. Cleared tree
Over severed heads of red men; bones last.
The Mayflower launched on the toy sea—
Lost in contentment, one horizon past.

One eye is hid in the darkness, one is left
Marine blue, blue as June seas. A few tears drift.
God and Mrs. God in watercolor blue skirt desolate.
In a sidestreet, condemned the house—lost! one sea,
one shore!
—Lift anchor!—four leaf clover, fore and aft!

Crow on the Husk

Jed's walking in his sleep on the sidewalk,
Crows deploy in the Square from a starved country.
Migratory fields remember, cornflower and chinch bug,
Chinch bug and cornflower; and migratory factories
Creep through his cracked shoes, bursting at the seam,
Emitting the plough, the meadow, first violet, first dream,
First star first fathers saw. Tractor and tank dismember
The mutilated plain; Jed's walking in the city—
Immortally, eternally, the seed expels the flower—
Rewinding the film of smoke and self-pity.

The kids in paper bags, hour after hour,
Hunted potatoes, dug in the flour barrel. Someone else
Is hanging the clothes line to one end of the empty cow shed.

The crow is shot by the medieval man whom Gabriel touches
In blue snow behind the American barn.

Who sees nor knows nor feels; but eats the hole—
The small earth falls apart—where was a soul.

The Darkness of the Night

The walls papered with old newspapers,
And a picture with little blue flowers
Stares at the calendar. Her children sleep, inert,
Their faces falling out of shape
Where the smoke rises from the clearing of trees
From the houses they glimpse on the road—
Road that has caught them to its own city.

Singing folk songs, the whole house lifted light;
They stopped work in spring
To pelt the Winter King with pebbles,
Cakes and laughter afterwards. Singing folk songs,
Her children leave her the room lifting light
Up and up. Sweet smell of honeysuckle in the night.
Your heart lifting up and up ...

(The Indian maid canoed across the Erie
Coal calendar on the wall very
Quietly, a mustache scribbled on her lips.)
White birch! glide into shoals of silence, glide
As life falls, quietly and afraid,
Between the whispers of the old woman—
Or picking coal in flour sacks; waylaid—
Against the huge darkness of the night.

Part II

Monterey

The hills were lush
With rain and youth. I did
What chores were my portion
In the shack I shared with two friends.
It was to be for us
A landmark in our lives, a moment
In our lives to which we returned,
When we were tired out, when
We didn't have anything else to
Do. What a home and parents should
Be.

She came with a friend,
Calling, on the road. She was
Dissatisfied with her lodging.
One of us met them on the
Road, invited them in for lunch.

I loved her not
For herself, but for myself. She
Was, of girls imagined, one.

I am a rugged individualist;
I did not tarry or pretend.

With Japanese Lanterns

Month of brides like white roses,
Perfect days. The garden dewfaced, greengood
To look at. June's festival.

Sabrina
On her pedestal, in front of the
Conservatory. My fleet-footed Thetis out of the
Winedark sea. Do not
Look at me. I feel so young and helpless.
As though I do not belong in this lawn
Of laughter. Where the Japanese Lanterns
Hang from the pine trees. The tennis courts,
A rotunda of nymphs in the arms of
Their partners.

Walking amid these elegant young men.
Girls like petals. Do not touch them, they
Are too delicate for your thought, I dared not
Walk among them but stood
In my room looking out.

Could I ever be as wise
(Looking)? Handsome as that
Man, in his Chrysler car?
Now no longer surprised that so
Fair their faces, foul their tongues.—
They are my orchids, blonde and brunette.

Knowing what it is worth; neither discreetly
Nor prudently.

Tomorrow to fresh woods and lanterns new.

Looking for a House

All evening the smell of phlox, your head
On my shoulder as the countryside sped
Past the auto.

You are,
Instinctively, the feeling
Of happiness, the visit equal
To desire.

Now my sober after-thoughts, in a
Double-breasted business suit, reckon
Not the minute review of time past
Which is the repetition of
Anxiety; only your face I see.
How can people hate?—it is
Such a waste of time.

Beloved, we went looking for a house
We could not find. Or did we find it,
Kind hearted girl, of flowers the mignonette.

Getting a Mosquito

When I most savagely
Attack him in my conversation (he
Is not there—), afterwards
I see his abundance, rebuking my
Partiality.

I am red with anger, bloodshot.
This mosquito's tintinnabulation
Vociferous gongs, molests me
Just a trifle. My wife
Investigates each cranny of the wall
For the malicious enemy.

(Through his conversation
I met his mother: she is still sitting
Far away, in the Jersey hills on a
Sunday, her hands pressed together, sweaty
Palms, gazing into vacancy. He
Said,

"When I saw her looking like
That, I never again resolved to
Budge one inch, in kindness. It's a fight
For existence, Darwin or no.")

My wife, sweet angel, has
Located the mosquito. How triumphantly
She bangs out its death with the New York *Times*.

The Mark

Sad as the rain am I now that God has
Graded me with a *B*-; in his class,
I loved the recess, studied the window.
Is it my fault who built me that way? Yet
Even God must suffer at his mistakes.

Why did he lie? Or didn't he know
Who promised me, that of phoenixes, I
Was not to be cremated, but a Glory.

A *B*- hurts; it isn't even
A mediocrity; not an *A* standing there
On its own legs, a smart man; but
A curved Greek, pliant and polite,
Lacking something.

Think of the sinuous bosom
Of a *C*, which sees all, and feigns
Indifference! An open mind is a *C*, a good
American, friendly, someone you can talk with. A *D*
On the other hand, stands for
Damn you! Who

Can survive its scurrilous echo?
An *E* is like an eel, squashy, squishy—
But mud in your eye whichever way you look at it.

As for the sacred excommunication's
F—final is it, finalities
Beyond the grave. And like the question *why*,
Haunting the victim in his tabula rasa.

BA (On the Same Theme)

Unsatisfied, that's the word. As when
Your meanings talk across each other with
Your best girl friend.

I see my name baaing
At me, like the blackest sheep of all.
All my associates have a great many
Degrees, *BA* wags after me
Like the can on a beaten cur's tail, reminiscing
Of cruel boys' victory.

I feel like an academic
Futility!

Who wants to be
The facile descensus *AB*, from being
To ineffable lowest depths. I tell you I'm
In a black mood. As
In the voices of grieving Euripides, woe

Is me.

Part III

West by the Rain

If the wind blows in the locust tree,
The city, upside down in the gutter,
Stirs and explodes in a pool of rain.
The towers, if a strong voice spoke,
Would sink past plummet line.
Slum and thug and heart of the town
Concentrating on lost sweet Adeline,
Even if a good breath were blown
Their shadows hanging upside down

Building the water the sound of a mad
Bird, bird, bird, bird, bird,
Singing unlistened to, unheard
On this last branch of sky gone red
With the aura from a trolley shed,
Here, in New York, when the bells are ringing
St. Francis into Convent Avenue—
City, dull or aflame, the sparrows sing.

Against the lesser darkness of the night
Injustice keeps a lantern lit
In the street straddled by rain.
the profile of the rain in the pool
Where the sidewalk sinks to grass in less than soil,
The wind blowing in the tree,
Accepts the water's city with a total infidelity.

City, city, city, city, city—
Talking transportation, a wind blew out of the sea.

Peter and Mother

"A hand is writing these lines
On your eyes for journeys
You'll never start for. They're
Transparencies. Wear rubbers
And you will be wise."

In dreams initial A and in the parlor
The chandelier was bright with small toy tears;
At evening the door opened on clematis
And his mother with a shawl ran down the years
To meet someone with an empty lunch-box.
As they returned across the lot—
He listened—in her head was truth
Hansel and Gretel and a bar
Of sweetest song.

Where the word
Is shadow of the deed and hard
Upon it like first crocuses
In snow ... "grow up and be
My tenement house, my brick building!"

This paper representation imperfectly made,
Be like words at a railway station still
Speaking though the train has gone—
The pity strong enough
To tear the four walls down, scatter the children,
The picture of the cow on the wall
Grazing an indifferent pasture.

Talking her trite ghost, the smell
Of lilac is fainter and fainter;

Thinking her worn face is like a face
A whiteness on the brush of some eternal painter.
And always growing farther, trying to hear
Something that was never expressed very
Clearly.

Her journey ended that was hidden
In the blindness of his naive skin.

The Letter

Built out of words, he sees her face
As something more and something less
Than evergreen. The day will soon replace
Each feature with a feature that will then
Continue its pathos, unseen.
Where have you come from, how far it is!
Right throgh the useless window, footsteps of
No sound and syllable. Thinnest woman, your

Hand that stretches night—it asks to be
"A love that's total?" Continents of clouds
He reads, and the "I do," ironic, too.
Till ripest, laughing lanterns come anew.
Her light, her dark, how shall he spell
Or her torture and salt and Ali Baba towers?
The sail limps in the empty cup, quite tame;
Lying awake, he thinks of her tired name:
A waving of the ink and her goodbye.
The constellation's handle is the question
Between the sentences that leads him on.

Her form—it hesitates within his eye—
Her wake, the ash, the smoke that curls above.
Here, the tall street has faltered and the stamp—
With cold and torn eyes—
Advances, is one step from paradise ...

Pier I

Full noon, and he is walking
With letters in his pocket,
A razor and a spool, a spool,
Needle and thread.

Full moon, and he is waking,
The spray parted his hair;
Between the ooze and garbage,
The stiff red hair is drifting.

The pockets are all empty,
The hands are clenched and ready,
A button in his wallet,
The world is two-and-twenty.

A razor and a spool, a spool;
No homecoming, girls' giggles.
The children in his loins—?
"No men required here."

The homecoming strives till
It comes to no shore.
The waters of Manhattan
Beside the barges lengthen.

The barges drift and lengthen;
The pleasure boats are full.
And O, so fair the Hudson!
And O, the girls so loving!

And O, the sailor sailing
Under the ancient stars.

The Lake

Star above, star below,
Smoke creeping on the fields—
The locomotive creeping.
O my star, my star below,
Take me so.

Poplar, green poplar and shadow
Of headlights, autolights on the pines.
Dry-rot forgot, maggot slug,
Bought and sold and lost and found;
Pine cone, pine needle on the ground,
On the pine a star, a moon;
On the pine today, yesterday,
Tomorrow, the mourning dove's tune.
Landscape of a dream and landscape tall
Of yours and my fairy tale.

Star above, star below,
I never loved you ever, never.
"What in the world shall we do," you said.
"You're always six years behind. Wish I were dead."

Star above, star below,
Too far to walk home. "Lord,
It's too far to find the word
In the train, in the rain, and through the glass
We saw through tears their gestures pass—
The kiss, the father, the errant child."

Star above, star below,
My lover, O my lover, O
The way is hard and wild and wild,
And the heart—it cries like a lost child.

For a Boy Infant's Wreath

"My piece of string, my crumb of bread,
The ruler says you are one smile old;
Now you will never be, on gold
Roller skates, my tall Rolls Royce;
Nor bring, except despair."

Winds of mirth, glittering teams of stars,
Springs, runnels, freshets, unto
The harbor's rubber heart.

It was a child, blithe as a strawberry ...
It is the leaf's innuendo, the bare virtuoso.
It is the mother's face, contorted with spasms
Like the grain coming out on wood, like the creasing
in tracing paper.

"In the bracken a fawn is bleeding.
The screaming branches are owls.
I count one, I count no star.
Where is the star called Theodore?"

Like a simple song of shoefly, bothering
A crust of bread, an inch of threaded ribbon
A pushcart, pinchpenny, bowlegged—
A woman, races through the centuries
A shawl of praying hands: *pursuit*!
By fugitives, their footsteps quarry the street.

They plant a funeral wreath
To be cut like a ring to wed the dirty door.

The Christmas Tree and the Terror

"Sea that used to come to the gates of the school"
And never crashed the gate,
I wonder, do you remember
The carollers crying with bitter cold,
Red apples for cheeks and candles?
O sea, we looked at you as exiles,
With Ditte chained in the house.
And poverty burrowed as a louse
In the hair of the poor; and sweat
Was crystalline and harps that holy evening.

II

Imagine the snow dropping on frame houses
Beside a river. A fat peasant woman
Carrying logs, her skirts blown awry.
Three curs with tails up in a raincoat sky.
She can see below the three smoke shafts
Of the power house, the abandoned summer porches.
She hurries home to eight glad eyes, four souls
To provide for. But the coals
Are flickering, are guttering as she walks.
There will be stockings waiting, oranges
And promises. Somewhere the nightingale.

III

At the foot of the Holy Jesus
Holy Jesus, Holy child, she lay
An offering of tears and gray
Withered mountain laurel. This spring
Songs will be sung and lovers

Will thank the good God in catholic countries.
She prays for a half articulate thing:
Snow is blowing bitterly, the fox
Barked all night. Even the people
In the brick house looked at their clocks,
And smiled reassured, thinking of Christmas.

IV

Bring a wreath of ice skaters for the tree
Without roots in Washington Park.
Incandescent was the sea,
Incandescent was the dark.
The road curled about his head.
The rose was red.
Beggars and tramps thought perhaps
Of homes in Flint or Wilkes-Barre.
The fox was caught in the trap
That night.

V

A snowman with pastel, child globs, warm globes
Of flower color; sleigh and bells
Along the Alps Road. Road that leads me back
To misery, broken and maculate road.
The silo half empty, the farm angles cut.
Along the bitter night you will return
By a celestial train you never discerned,
Even in moments of utter sadness
When school began or the hired laborer
Dropped his heavy boots on the ground:
They stood like soldiers waiting for Taps to sound.
We stood about the tree thinking of heaven
Of earth and of all possible greenery:

A strange lamb from a strange scenery,
And the trams running on as usual,
And children playing in the streets,
And the rich people drinking coffee.

VI

Sea that used to come up to the gates of the school,
We were jealous of your freedom.
Now you will come again with the sound of muffled
Tiny drums, again, again. Now
Imagine, imagine, America, from the poet Alberti
The veritable roots of a Christmas Tree:
Gladness and singing and the warm south
In your mouth; hand in hand, land to
Land—singing the old year out with his blood.

The Visitor

He came from the mountains into this
Garden. Welcome, sir, all that I have is yours.

He came from the mountains, he spied
The kind shade. He sate with me under the oak tree.

What have you done in the mountains, sir,
Besides hunting the white deer all day?

In the mountains I hunted and I plotted
Your garden's destruction and ruin.

In the mountains I hunted a similitude
To obtain your trusting mood.

Therefore I slay you as
You dream of the friendship I bear.

Said the man from the mountains the mountains
Who came to visit me here.

But I shall, as I look only upward
My star being set in the mountains,

Said the man, the man from the mountains,
See only the fair garden that I murdered here

Said the man the man from the mountains.

Part IV

The Happy Traveller

Farewell, O zinnias, tall as teetotalers,
And thou, proud petunias, pastel windows of joy,
Also to you, noble tree trunks, by name
Elm, with your dark bark in the dark rain, couchant
Like comfortable elephants. And you
Mailbox colored robin's egg blue on the poor
House, shy, set back (a poor gentleman but
Irreproachable), with your shutters robin's egg
Green. You, street, striated with rain like a new penny,
And houses planted by arbor-vitae trees,
By miniature pines that lean against you for
Support—Hail and farewell!

And I, outside in the rain, look inside
These elms whose branches tip and touch
The slant roof, slain by the four fireplaces
Where life, slowly, life is conventional
In a sheer seersucker dress, with blue eyes,
A red ribbon in her pale hair, eats a sundae,
Glances at the young man.

O city whose lives
Gather their accumulation of days
Carefully as well-kept lawns.

Past the proud apartment
Houses, fat as a fat money bag. I wish that I
Might stay in this pleasant, conventional
City, as I study a sturdy clover
Bent back by a dewdrop of rain. But then
From the corner of a mood like Les Sylphides,

Impossible, romantic as certain moons
In certain atmospheres, then you called me
From the corner of the street. And,
Like buttercups, like invitations: I.

Dissertation on the Detroit Free Press

For my vacation, I thought like Silas
Marner, being my own miser of the past,
To revisit what Craven calls "the good
People of Detroit." I went elsewhere.
Why is it that the voyage is always
Consummated in speech; travel is
Silent, plans profound, original ways of looking.

Who left this copy of the Detroit
Free Press on this seat where I shall
—If the engineer keeps his pledge—
Spend seven hours watching cities
Tossed away like memories, hustled
So that I have to tell myself that this
Tempus of existence, rather a tempest
Is life, with all these people I am
Living through their lives.

I offer you a candle, old fashioned
Fidelity, on your grave, O lonely dead,
To whom unhappiness no longer makes a difference.
These flowers, which I do not bear, I drop
On your tombstone, so that you could hear me
As I dare say you do, in this wilderness
You would be proud of a gift
Who always gave.

I like the amateur
Homeliness with which this paper is written.
I can see the reporters trying to
Impress themselves, the very words are
Roughedged, the in is impermanent.

That is Middle West. Friendliness.
Even Ford is just a unit in production
Homely, dazzling nobody with his headlights.

Since I am at your grave, I want
To beg of your incredible goodness, the
Flowers I gave you. I want to give them to
The living, a loyalty like your own.
Without commitments, life go hang.
I am looking for the person you want me to
Give these to. Before I am dispensable.

Now as the train rounds a curve, I see
The engineer who impels our movement.
Only at the curve, perhaps, do we realize
The impetus with which our goal is driven.

Gawayn and the Green Knight

It began as an idyll of Theocritos
With the most sophisticated simplicity
You can imagine. We spoke in understatement
Each going under the other's unremark.
I thank you for your courtesy, gentle knight,
I will intrude myself in your domain,
Being in need of sustenance, and I
Promise to keep intact the fair tradition.

The work prospered, till the yellow time
Of parting, when vacationers pick out
Their favorite stage setting on which
To take a minute's recess from life,
Maine or Vermont or South to Caribbean's
Key West.

My host came out of the chapel,
I kept the rendezvous in what fashion
My legend has told you, though I was sick to death
Of the bloodshed of hunting, the gore, the hacking
Of nations on the growling backdrop of the time.

The room itself, in five short minutes, I saw
Transformed into a scene for waltzers
From a staid business appointment.

"Someone," the Green Knight said, "said that you
Would not come." At these words I
Could not contain myself. I was not
Gawayn. There was no chapel. I hate
Triumph and victory. The other's loss!

"I am not afraid," I shouted, "not terrified
That every man must learn to work together
In the common task."

The Green Knight, thereupon,
Drew me back to myself, being appointed
Prisoner of poverty and
Gawayn by one I do not know. He said,
"The masquerade is over. Mankind is ready."

The Snow in the Mouse Wind

I

Its cigarette twitches like a heart
It smells of smoke, carbolic acid;
While wishes snore, it will write
Letters to the queen of hearts;
Its shuddered face it could not stop
Voice of the screaming, shrill roof tops;
Suffering with each bone it is.
It could not stop its ghastly sweat,
Choked in a terrible childbed.

And every street, too old, too cold,
Too wrinkled to support that load;
And no brass-buttoned voice, trumpeting out
The shell cracked, and slimy rout.

And it is like a ferris wheel,
Up and down, the stars reel,
It takes the north star, shines it more,
It's on a plane tree it adores.
Whose roots creep up and down beside
Mumble grumble, seek and hide
Children: are its lullabye.
And for brown eyes, and for blue eyes—?
And how much for my baby? Sigh
The mothers, and a penny cries,
So cold, the wind's nose on its nose.

Past panting lions with smudgy joys,
It whirls through a carousel of boys,
The century cracking to cracked toys

Its whispers and complaining ears.

And then from door to door throughout
The whisper world until it hears
In stone and steel, "For god's sake, what

II

"What in the world are you trying to do
In the small room, shivering so.—But
It won't hurt it really won't, tell me!—
I'll touch you with my thought and we—
We'll walk out on the sea as one
Crosses the street, and on the sun
In amber day, before!—but run!—
The road can catch and catches us—
But the black buoys! and before
Those buildings lean down grabbing us—
Run! It won't hurt. Learning's like
Learning to walk after a long
Sickness, singing, happy as
Happy children all day long."

Its cigarette twitches like a heart.—"I
Beg you, take the desirable horse
For hills that saddle a most unpopular course.
They once made a wish, remember? You
Once made a wish, upon a time, too.
The green gown was a window, a wind house
From which you frowned. It was a light
You nibbled at. You had a picnic of
Bright tulips on your hat. You said,
'It will always be like this?'—spoken
Between a laugh and a kiss.—Won't you
Come with me, my dear, I beg of you."

It smells of smoke, carbolic acid, as
It pulls like a kite. "Crying, you
Want to get off. But you know, you've
Just died. Indeed all the tears are
Counted, one by one, and safely filed away.
Respectfully dried that were respectfully cried.
My vanity case hides
Between your old words in the night."

Its woolen lashes laugh a brouhaha. "I would not
Go through that business once more,
Not in a million years."

Whispers of the snow
Complaining smoke and blood.
And wishes snoring while it writes
Letters to the queen of hearts.

The Picnic

I

They tread, softly, out of the vagina:
The kiss incarnate, the shot spark,
Climbing the tree.
Women wake, fantasy fabricated,
In relatives, in property, narcotic in rouge and silk.

Eyes worry that laughing lap
Gay in its design of sunflower. She
Has the anemone fat in its vase.
—The legs men fringe are mauve and indigo
Tissued ...

—Black wind—you!—raper of skirts!
Arc that fears begs its fear.—Earth's crust
Is also a frail, wrinkled walnut shell, biding
These mouths, tremulous, minuted, fading
Like the afternoon's patchwork quilt of newspaper.

Glory of funeral, of salamander lips:
The rose here composes archaic bells.
Ice at the core, fire at the very tip—
Lounged eyes—
Hands plunged on swaying hips!

II

The tugs will mutter, "I hate, I love,"
In the key of B flat minor; your
Face, misted with the curling of
Voices, relaxed in sleep's sweet smell,

—Rouge and indigo silk the door—
Will be in the elms a murmur bell,
—Tall as a tulip, who sleep, sweet girl.

Beyond the most tremendous apple
With the first silver fishes swimming by it:
The sky peals, it's almost gone.
On this steep shore, almost fallen—
Sighabye, lullabye, the sighs are wan,
Are this leaf moon, this picnic ground—
Monotone clouds presaging storm.

The falseface moon redeems, however,
For one split second, a stray match;
Ignites an island with its catch—
Detached, beside some torn newspaper.

The Simple Scale

To Ben Belitt

She is playing, *The Harmonious Blacksmith;*
Inside the music is a window; there, she sees,
A raindrop's drop of dwindled rain,
A fly that lifts two legs, scratches, bored bourgeois,
The calculating air—when lo!—
The music interrupts them all, as it interrupts itself.

I

The rushing tree is red! Breathlessly—
John, where are you John?—an errand waits.

II

Shall he speak the slight mistake, without
The waving of handkerchiefs, the flat
Roofs falling, in the hurricane of hands.
Goodbye's a slight mistake; distances
Beside the secret conversation stand,
Beholding, like milestones, the harmonious blacksmith.

III

Their voices are thinned, and threadbare; they both sound,
A chinese school, a tawdry merry-go-round.

IV

Far, how far, O out of the sea's smoke quarries,
Its thousand skies, its gull claw sail,

Its horse's flashing tooth—
And farther than the scream, that coils around
The underside of her smile—to hide ... underground!—
Their faces are like hollyhocks,
Across a fence of rain they mock
The puddle, and the chewing gum wrapper!

V

Pencil, pencil, speak it again,
How the woman is playing, *The Harmonious Blacksmith.*

VI

She is playing. *The Harmonious Blacksmith.*
Inside the music is a window.
Is she this gay and wimpled smile,
That sobbing children will someday sob?
He is not too small, not too tall—
He's one who doesn't grow at all.
They listen to the blacksmith, he is forging
Their ancient joy, their lucky leagues.
The rain is dusky with fatigue,
She leans upon it, she taps out
Globes of light on the window, she
Holds herself, on the raindrop's branch.

VII

She is playing, *The Harmonious Blacksmith.*

It Is Sticky in the Subway

How I love this girl who until
This minute, I never knew existed on
The face of this earth.

I sit opposite
Her, thinking myself as stupid as that
Photograph, maudlin in Mumford, of
Orpheus.

A kinkled adolescent
Defies the Authorities by
Smoking a butt right next to me. He is
Of Romeos the least attractive who
Has played the role.

He
Smirks, squints, glues his eyes to her
Tightly entethered teeth, scratches
His moist passion on some scratch paper.

Her eyes
Accuse Plato of non-en
Tity. Most delightful creature of moment's
above-ground.

The Skeleton in the Closet

This man, who suddenly appears out of my past
His face remarkable like an Italian peasant's
Gnarled and rugged with roots of weather,
Rivulets of suffering, hands crude, swollen
With work as a patchwork field, makes me
Think how Nietzsche, who knew the pathos of
Distance, was unacquainted with the presence
Of pathos.

Childhood is an indignity, which
Our pompous manhood stoops to elevate
With rote laughter at what it was. Think then,
How erratic, what a diapered feeling it is
To be in the compulsory province of
A tyrant you do not in the least understand, who
Breaks the mirrors of your unlucky years
With devastating effect.

It was a marriage. Last I saw
Him, it was a funeral. I speak of the meetings of
Climactic moments. There were the one or two
Intervals of rebuff, a half-hour at most
Spread through a decade. Here he was, in flesh and
Blood, the odious

Villain. What did I do?
I felt sorry for him. I who had
Hated him so, didn't even dislike
Him. Until he opened his mouth.
His barbaric yawp chased me across the roofs
Of the world, into childhood, where, I am ashamed to
Say, most cordially, most fervently I detested.

The Transformation

The caterpillar, convoluted on the sun
Flower, like a cat purring before an
Eighteenth century fireplace, classically
Retrospective, is neither violent nor enigmatic.
He is a Brookyn Dodger, popularly reckoned
As the leaf's nibbler, in reality
The butterfly's storehouse, as the cat is
Watt's inspiration, his steam engine.

Curled so, on my own leaf, I have
Like Augustine proceeded through suffering
To suffering because I suffered and
Suffered over that, hunting not the current movie
But the star, more radiant than Greer Garson;
While my kin, I mourned their departure.
Thus I died, as she did—for is death not
Only vacuity, a luna in the breathing
Habits? And what good is it to be
A Moon, when what is wanted is the pulsing
Radiance of homecoming and laughter?

Now that, like myself, I walk the firm earth
I think of those whom living see I not,
Separation of errands, leading onward.
My sister, who acommpanied me
On good times on the grass, walks through
Belle Isle, swimming, whom I trailed while a tot
Like a Siamese twin, with what insidious
Pursuit, trying to catch up with her wisdom—

What about her?—She too suffered the lapses
Of remembering which is grief's nostalgia,

Recrimination for no wrong done, unless
Ignorance's youth is evil-doing. She saw
New York's definition
As brute power while I still bewailed
My lack of support, of "sympathy."
She watched her friends taking on
The aspect of building materials,
Iron, cement, concrete.

What of her
Friendlessness. Who took care of her?
I, being her ambitious genius, scoffed the
Insouciant blackheads, whiteheads of her
Concern more than she disliked her own
Face. How tired I am of myself,
How tired she was of herself.

If either had
Been much older or much younger?—In hotel
Lobbies, after every particle of energy
Spent typing figures, gazing at the rich,
At Coney Island, making believe a beach
Where there were real waves, full of water
Not the little litter of junk and filth
Which the shingle retains till doomsday.
Finding in cheap amusements her support?
How cheap the svelte in the Persian Room
With their decolleté intrigues, bare-breasted.

And I ride with her now, in the subway,
Wanting somehow to do something
For my omission. It is to my eternal
Discredit that, just as years gone by,
I cannot communicate with her, can't
Think of a single thing to tell her.

I wish her well. The therapy
Is taking for granted the ugly scene, the
Actual tile subway station and
The frustration which time—can it undo?

Part V

Reflections on Violence

I dislike going with a woman
Into a restaurant. There is
A plot of mirrors
All designed to make me self-conscious.

"—Will you
Please stop looking at yourself
In your exquisite Cloisonné compact.
Your lips, your hair is
Very nice. Everybody's eyes say
So."

O voyeurs! intruding
On my domestic date, do you see
Any glory in this ancient
Ritual?

Hunters of
The unshuttered nudes of accidental windows.

Prospect Park

I would like to ask that dumb ox, Thomas
Aquinas, why it is, that when you have said
Something—you said it—then they ask you
A month later if it is true? Of course it is!
It is something about them I think. They think
It is something about me. It adds up
To my thinking I must be what I don't
Know ...

—The park is certainly
Tranquil tonight: lovers, like ants
Are scurrying into any old darkness,
Covert for kisses. It makes me feel
Old and lonely. I wish that I were
All of them, not with any one,
Would I exchange my lot, but the entire
Scene has a certain Breughel quality
I would participate in.—

Do I have to repeat
Myself. I really mean it.
I am not saying it again to convince myself
But to convince the repressed conviction
Of yourself. I think. I think. I think it.

Midston House

What is needed is a technique
Of conversation, I think, as I put on the
Electric light. But not the limited
Vocabulary of our experience, the
Surface irritations which pile up,
Accumulate a city—but the expression,
Metamorphosed, of what they are the
Metaphor of;—and their conversion into light.

On the bus toward Midston House
I survey the people in their actions. Placid
And relaxed are they; this is the humdrum
Claptrap costume of girls and food, men
And work and house. The insurance
Of habit is circular, as
Democracy has interlocking duties,
Circular obediences.

Yet how to transform
The continual failing clouds of
Energy, into light? The vital
Intelligence of the man whom I am
Going to visit—does he know? I
Think how the sharp severing of
My life's task—severed associations,
Produced in me almost a
Lypothymia of grief and a hiatus of
Days, which grew fangs of anger, my
Lycanthropy—thank god, it's over!

I am fired from my job by flames, big
As angry consciences: I can do

Nothing; I have not one ability! This man
Whom I am waiting to see in the lobby—
All my life I am waiting for something that
Does not eventuate—will he
Exist?

The law of life, like an abstract
Rigorous lawyer, passes a terrifying judg-
Ment on poor little me, in a strange foreign
Syllogism. He is cheating me! He will not
Keep the appointment!

His probity
Rebukes my suspicion. What can I say, that
I love him; that I am un-
Worthy? My doubt makes me feel,
—Even as we discuss another's dishonesty—
Ugly, irate, and damned avid, a cunning
Rascal, like that ugly bird of the White
Nile.

But the poem is just this
Speaking of what cannot be said
To the person I want to say it.
I am sleepy with subtlety; the room strikes me as
Dark, so cold, so lonely. There is
No one in it. I will put on all the lights.
I wish I could go
On a long, on a long long journey
To a place where life is simple and decent, not
Too demanding.

No! On the vehicle, Tomorrow, I will see
That man, whose handshake was happiness.

The Meaning of Winter

O I see the
Face—Hideous is selfishness.

(What was summer? It was the descent of
leaves? October is the month of breaking
mind, though I assert with complete certainty,
it is ultimately the oak's strength. What
celebrations!—)

Carolyn told me:

"The winter wind on Amsterdam Avenue
Behind St. Luke's Hospital, listens, halts,
It is a maimed crippled beggar, wanting a
Handout. The sailors talk of big
Times. Then the winter wind begins.

"The winter wind blusters like
A base ingrate; has no patience.
Muck tramples the green film of
Girls in remembered frocks."

(And then, you must add to all this the cold
Sky, the color of a quarrel. Premonitions of
disaster; of course, the month's environment.
Why do I keep thinking of you?)

The principle of our time is
Selfishness.

Victor Record Catalog

Most unexpectedly it happens, just
As you don't know what you say till you
Say it. Sleighbells in the winter of
My discontent.

(Like all people, she spoke
By contradiction, so that I had to hear
The negatives of her remarks to find out
How much I liked her. She lived, way up,
In a Kafkalike passageway of bureaucratic
Offices, anonymously ugly, one inside
The other, just like Kafka's temper tantrums.)
She lived there. I didn't like it.

She looked at me
Alternately too severe and too
Gentle. Why did I hear
Her say that all men are brothers?
"We journey
under the four winds, past
The enemy's chariot and
Past the river where drown the
Attached. You and I, however,
Are exceptions to every rule. Being glad,
We will survive."

Outside the window it was
A hot saggy day in August. The Coast Guard
Drilling at war, far as the Pacific.
As poverty is my taskmaster, as
I study the Victor Record Catalog instead
Of listening to the paragon's

Prerogative: Eugene Ormandy, my
Expectancy
Makes me slightly sick, as when years ago,
Hungry for food, I came to friends and they
Talked; now I wait for her to speak
The meanings which I must negate before
I am admitted to the gayest person.

A Successful Summer

The still small voice unto
My still small voice, I listen.
Hardly awake, I breathe, vulnerably,
As in summer trees, the messages
Of telegraphed errands buzz along
July's contour of green.

Predicament

"Their love is exhausted in
Family,' you told me. It is true
To my experience; what can one do?
To be left with the cinders of recrimination
For what cannot be returned. No,
To live without expectation of
Love. That is like a toothache,
Chronic and infectious. To mock
Your feelings, as someone I know,
Laughing at us all as sexual
Maniacs, is but self-mockery.

Shall I say the apple, lone on
The stem, which the pickers have
Forgotten or has forgotten them
So shines, so rots from morn to eve
Thuds to the ground, unmissed. Believe
Me—I cannot agree.

Love, I think, is
With hate our most spontaneous
Reaction. We are unforgiving in our
Egoism, set pillars for ourselves,
Being our own Simon Stylites.
At worst, burying our small, dull
Talent, under a bushel of
Other people's responsibilities:

Repeatable patterns, cheap at any price! Yet
Under the surface, under the
Effete noon's memorandum—

Uprushes love like a Fountain—
A gentle stream, yet speaking

A lesson to the morning star.

No Title

A ghastly ordeal it was. In
Retrospect, I am no longer young.
Wise, sad, as unhappy as seeing
Someone you love, with whom life has
Brought suffering, or someone you
Have nothing in common with, yet love—
Unable to speak a word.

If when I say this I weep, it is not
Because my heart has turned into a
Lachrymose commentator; the
Discus thrower's still
There—the shining one, quick. It is because
In my moment of rejoicing, I
Thought that one who has suffered with me shall
Rejoice. There was no
One. Not one answered.

Of suffering, who wants to be reminded?

Sitting on the bench in the
Botanic Garden, watching the charming scene
Beguiled by poplars giving it a fairy tale
Atmosphere.

I was annoyed by someone!
He wanted money. I resented
Him. He disturbed my mood.

The euphemisms of our age
Make tolerable a universal selfhood,
Which the sick soul, alas, was always sick of.

What but goodnesses' was the dark night
Of the soul, as yet unimmured to its
Failings, sensitive as the snail's an
Tennae?

I stood there on 42nd Street and
Eighth Avenue. I stood there with two
Nickels.

I went to one on whose
Memory I hardly counted; my
Friends—did they care?—and how could I
Ask them, being if a beggar, proud.

How little space there is
Between success and nothing at all.
Watching the passersby
Who fitted in somewhere in what was a
Society.

Outcast. Exiled. Penniless.
Never. Never. Never. Never. Never.
Shall I stand spellbound by the
Reiteration's disaster?
No! What is
Over is over.

A Corsage

Feeling like "a very village of sorrow,"
Just like Franz Schubert, with each sad bourgeois
Dolorously doleful, I only said
When you asked me for my life-story,
"Well, the world is a funny place, un
Pleasant things can happen."

I chewed
The silence, cryptic and stupidly.
I felt diminished by myself, much like
The passport photographs that make you look
Like an escaped convict or
The victim of circumstances.

I
Am the oyster shell, after the
Succulent seaworm's been devoured,
With only the pretense of sea in your cupped
Ear.

The next day you wore a
Corsage of pansies.
Exultantly alive, serious scholars
Of melancholy, brave and lionhearted
With thoughtful thoughts.

Now
In this wall of eyes before me, icy eyes,
Now in the Broadway 7th Avenue Van Cortlandt
Subway, feeling quite walled in, Henry
David Thoreau breaks the ice, says
"Time is the stream I go a

Fishing in—what about
You?"

I, Henry, will study
These pansies, profoundest
Professors of the world's woes.

The Creation of Others

"What soul is without flaw?"
Asked sad Rimbaud, rebellious.

Now as I end the career,
Arena being flood's circuit—
I see the people I passed,
Whom I must live with, still;—their right
Who can question?

I see the sad lost face, white, and white,
Of Parsifal. Reining his horse in the
Dreary hostel of his desperation.
Eyes drawn. Skin tight about the cheekbones.

Sad lost eyes; cramped in the barren wild.

Although he must now enact
According to his ability, the role given;
Parsifal is obedient. Faithfuly bides
His sincere tryst, in the moonlight.

Another Poet Called David

I reached a point where there was no
Use going on: my companion said, "Do not waken
The watchman, do not shout, he will die
Of shock if you make the slightest
Sound." I stood in the utter darkness,
Cold. Without evidence of myself.

The technique of diversion con-
Founds the rival by simulating friendship or
As the Victorians might say, worming
Affections. Then, at the point of trust,
As on this dark stage where one man sleeps
Slumped by the flashlight, to change the
Mode of address, from friend-
Ship to a complete stranger, to shriek-
Ing subtlety, to innuendo, and back to
Friendship. The executive wishes to
Demoralize his employee, perhaps he is slightly
Jealous?

I do not know. At the time I could not enjoy
The enchanting silly coffee waves, sometimes
Sapphire, which is the fluid stream of our life.
Since then, like William James, I have learned
Ice-skating in my August, after—

At that point I returned;
Since there was no point going on I went back,
I spoke again to the marvelous friends of
My youth: for a short while it was a life.

That you were not willing I am sorry.

No Finis

When you cannot go further
It is time to go back and wrest
Out of failure some
Thing shining.

As when a child I sat
On the stoop and spoke
The state licenses, the makes
Of autos going somewhere—

To others I leave the fleeting
Memory of myself.

Translations from Baudelaire

The Albatross

Men of the crew, to amuse themselves, often
Catch albatrosses, vast birds of the sea,
Who pursue, indolent hailfellows of travel,
The boat scudding on the bitter gulfs.

Scarcely have they set them on the planks,
When these kings of the azure, gawky and ashamed,
They leave piteously their tall white wings
Like oars dragging about their sides.

This traveller, winged, how gauche and weak it is!
It's, lately so handsome, how comical, how homely!
Somebody worries its beak with a short pipe.
Another mimics, limpingly, the sick that flew.

The poet is brother to the prince of clouds
Who haunts the tempest and laughs at the archer.
Exile on earth in a street of shouts,
His giant's wings obstruct his moving about.

Autumn Sonnet

They speak to me, your eyes, clear as crystal:
"For you, queer lover, what's my value, what?"
—Be lovely and shut up! My heart, all things hurt it
Excepting candor of the antique animal,

Doesn't want to show its hellish secret to
You, rocking-chair whose hand to tedious sleep invites,
Nor its black legend by my fire written.
I hate all passion and wit makes me sick!

Gently, let us love. Love, in its watchtower,
In shadow, ambuscading, draws its mortal bow.
Machines of its old arsenal I know:

Crime, terror, and frenzy!—O pale marguerite!,
Are you not, like myself, an autumn sun,
O my so white, O my so cold Marguerite?

The Voyage

to Maxime du Camp

I

For the child, in love with maps and prints,
The universe is equal to his huge appetite.
Ah! How tall the world is by light of lamps!
By memory's eyes, how small the world is.

One morning we depart: head filled with flames,
Heart big with spite and bitter desires, we
Journey on: following the rhythm of the waves,
Cradling our infinity on the finite of the sea:

Some, merry at fleeing a scandalous land;
Others, the horror of their cradles; and some
Astrologers within a woman's eyes drowned,
Circe, tyrannic over dangerous perfumes.

To not to change to beasts, they get dead drunk
With space and light and with the heaven's roar;
Ice that gnaws them, suns that turn them to copper,
Wear out, slowly, the kisses' signature.

But the real travellers are those who depart
For parting's sake; hearts light as balloons,
For their fatality they never lose heart,
And not knowing why, say always, "Journey on!"

Those whose desires have the shape of skies,
And who dream, just as a rookie his gun,

Of vast voluptuousness, various, past surmise,
And for which, the soul of man has a name never known.

II

We imitate, O horror! the top and ball
Waltzing and bouncing; in sleep, even,
Curiosity torments and tosses us all
Like a cruel angel who flogs the sun.

Unique career! in which the goal recedes,
And, being nowhere, it may not matter where!
In which man, whose hope never leaves him,
To find peace runs, like a lunatic, forever!

Our soul is a three-master, seeking its Soviet:
A voice booms from the bridge, "Eyes, sharp, there!"
A voice from the crow's nest, hot and wild, bawls out,
"Love ... glory ... happiness!" Hell! it's a sandbar!

Each tiny island, signalled by the lookout—
It is an Eldorado promised by fate;
Imagination that rehearses its drinking bout,
Finds only a reef by light of day.

O the poor lover of ghostly countries!
Must we clap him in irons, cast overboard
This drunk mariner, inventor of Americas,
With his mirage that bitterest gulfs restore?

So the old vagabond, treading through mud,
Dreams, nose in air, of sparkling paradises;
His charmed eye discovers a Tahiti but
The candle lights up, all about him, a pigstye.

III

Astonishing travellers! what noble stories
We read in your eyes, profound as the seas!
Show us the jewelbox of your rich memories,
Those marvelous jewels, made of stars and space.

We want to voyage without steam and sail!
To enliven the tedium of our jails,
Review on our minds, stretched out for your canvas, will
You?, your memories in their horizons' frames!

Speak! What have you seen?

IV

"We have seen stars
And waves; we have seen sand too;
And in spite of much shock and unforeseen disasters,
We often bored ourselves as here we do.

"Glory of sun upon the violet sea,
Glory of cities of the setting sun,
They kindled in our hearts a vague anxiety
To plunge into the sky's piquant reflection.

"Most opulent of cities, most magnificent landscapes,
They never possessed the mysterious charm
Of those that, out of clouds, Accident made.
And always, desire restored us, careworn!

"—Possession adds to desire's force;
Desire, old tree that pleasure manures,
However it fattens, toughens that bark of yours,
Your branches want to see the sun ever more near!

"Will you always grow greater, great tree, more ever-
Green than the cypress?––Howsoever, with care,
We've culled some sketches for your ravenous sketchbook,
O brothers who find beautiful whatever comes from far!

"We have given our greetings to elephant idols,
Thrones constellated with luminous gems;
Elaborate palaces whose faery pomp will
Be for you bankers a bankrupting dream;

"Costumes that are for the eyes a drunkenness;
Women with tooth and talon, multicolored;
And sage jugglers whom the serpent caresses."

V

And then? What comes next?

VI

O childish heads!

"Not to forget the most important matter,
We have seen everywhere, without seeking, even,
From top to bottom of the fatal ladder,
The tedious spectacle of immortal sin!

"Woman, loathsome slave, haughty and stupid,
Without a smile adoring herself, without disgust her suitor;
Man, gluttonous tyrant, lecher, hardhearted, avid,
Slave of the slave and eddy in the sewer!

"The hangsman who frolics, the martyr who sobs;
The merrymaking spicing, perfuming the blood;
The poison of power that stupefies the despot;

And, in love with the brutalising whip, the mob!

"Several religions, very like to ours,
All scaling heaven; Sanctity, as
Upon a featherbed a dandy lies,
In nail and horsehair, seeking voluptuousness.

"Babbling humanity, drunk with its own daemon,
And insane now as it was in days gonebye,
Bawling to god in its hideous agony,
'O my own image, my creator ... I ... curse thee!'

"And those less sottish, impudent lovers of delirium,,
Fleeing the great herd penned up by destiny,
And taking refuge in immense opium!
—That's the whole globe's newsreel for all eternity!"

VII

Bitter the knowledge, he who ends the voyage!
The world, monotonous and small, today
Yesterday, tomorrow, always, reflects our image,
An oasis of horror in a desert of ennui!

Must he depart?, remain? If you can remain, remain!
Depart if you must! This one runs, that one hides
In their efforts to cheat the enemy, alert, baneful
Time! They are, alas! runners without respite,

Like the Wandering Jew and like the Apostles
Whom nothing satisfied, nor cart nor sail,
Fleeing the scandalous Netsman; others,
Know how to kill him, not quitting their cradles.

When, at length, he sets foot on our spines,
We can hope and cry out, "Advance ... !"
As when, long ago, we departed for China,
Eyes on the deep and hair in the wind,

So now we take passage on the sea of dark
With the merry heart of a young tourist.
Do you hear those voices, lovely and stark,
That sing out, "This way! you who want to taste

"The perfumed lotos! here's where you gather
The miraculous fruits for which your heart hungers;
Won't you come and get drunk on the strange savor
Of an afternon that shall never be over?"

At that familiar tone we recognise the spectre:
Our Pylades, over there, holds out his hands to us.
"To refresh your heart, dive down to your Electra,"
Says someone, who ... in days gonebye ... we kissed her knees.

VIII

O Death, old captain, it is time! let us lift anchor!
This country bores us, O Death! Get under way!
If sky and sea are black as ink,
Our hearts, as you know, are radiant with rays!

Pour us your poison to fortify us!
We want, this fire burns our head so,
To plunge to the bottom of the gulf, Hell or Heaven, does it
matter much?
To the bottom of the Unknown in search of something *new*.

WORKS AND DAYS

A MULTI-AUTO-BIOGRAPHY

Devised by Renée Karol Weiss

I

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES (Wife) 1980

Molly and I were sitting on a Monterey, Massachusetts lawn, on a very hot August day in 1932, munching the berries we had gathered, while we tried to hitch a ride back to our inn. Neither of us noticed the figure that emerged from the house behind the trees until we heard the crackling of leaves made by the moccasined feet of the young man who approached us; he sat down on a rock a little distance away. About five feet eight, and very slender, his tan corduroy jacket, brown slacks and dark blue shirt open at the throat were far from outlandish. Probably it was his enigmatic smile, and the way he looked through us with his extraordinarily large dark blue eyes, that suggested some non-being from a Tennyson idyll.

When I asked if he lived in that house in the woods behind him, he shook his head no, he was a guest of college friends. When I took for granted that he too was a student he let me know that he had been but was no longer—but that he was a poet!

I too was very much interested in poetry and asked if he would recite one of his poems. Without a moment's delay he began.

Narcissus

Strew holly smiles, parade retinues of mirth,
Pelt him with all your golden armory of smiles.
Rejoice with Narcissus, he is dead. Crowds
Of white anemone sheath his oblivious head.
He is disintegrated, departed from this use,
Though winds play tag with his moot bones
The haunted skull is quiet in defeat.
Shoreward he hears the argent plucking of rain
On arboreal strings, chit-chat of poplar he hears

Past the silver meshed night and night's bullet eye.
But slowly the belle bright stars expend their passion,
The bright rich stars on branches of ether pinned
Like silver fruit, like fruit fall in corruption.
And the lutanist rain seeks his silent bed.

*

Until I came to Gensaret
I was the miserablest man alive.
I yearned for perfect peace
As the sunflower for the sun,
Such beauty must I know
Before my course were run.

So I made my skin hard,
Indifferent to my name,
And stealthily as a leopard
I stalked my prey as other men stalk fame ...
In garden, temple, square
Where carefully sprayed and pruned
Expensive women go—
Diminish, lengthens my shadow,
I do not discover my quest.
So tired and balked
To slum and ghetto came,
Ever the same,
Unbeauty manifest.

So I left the mart and carriage
For forest marriage,
So I built me a log cabin
By the ever lifting ocean,
White pine and cedar walled
By the murmurous gurgling ocean,
That only the stars might drop in
By the driveling greybeard ocean,
And only the birds pay call
By the doting lunatic ocean.

I wove of sedge and osier
A roof to prevent and cover
Rain, snow, hail, every terror—
And I lived in forest cover.

But the hammer would not still,
It pounded to kill:
Trees goosefleshed when I pass by,
Crow and vulture cloud my sky.
Where are goldfinch, oriole, robin, thrush?

Though I go when the small dew bites
With the step of a mouse
And no hoarse wind affrights
The world about:
Rabbits wiggle into house,
Birds climb their ladder of green boughs,
Even the frog
Dives from his throne on the inland log,
And the gnat
Is quiet,
And the cricket hides his song in the thicket ...

O white waves, lashing your spite
Against the senseless coal black night,
You vainly strive to break the bonds
That tie you to your coral bed.
And must we bend as weeds in a rough sea
To time, to circumstance, to daily death?
Wind worried waves, moon haunted, succor me,
And, as a bird moults feathers ragged and sorry,
By this water of Gensaret I shed all worry.

Haiee! haiee! I am free!
Wind be my partner, my hobby horse the great sea lion!
Haiee! haiee! I have intercourse
With sea-king and mermaiden,
Parley with submerged sea-men.

On the sea soft breast there is no fret,
No heavy wailed duet
Twixt have and heaven.

Now the Old Man of the sea
Strews emeralds on me!
I catch them as they fall.
No fond promise
Of miraged happiness
But a lasting Atlantis
And a green felicity:
    Here is peace, beauty for all,
        Follow me,
            Follow me ...

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

The poem was long and full of references to mythological characters. Meanwhile Charles Magnum and John Moore came towards us through the woods. They were the college friends from Amherst. David Schubert had also been to Amherst.

JOHN THEOBALD (Amherst teacher) 1980

... a dark distinctly comely youth, with hazel eyes and a self-effacing way that carried courtesy to a fault .... It was during my first year as an instructor at Amherst College that David Schubert first knocked on my door at 45 Amity Street. I was about ready to go to bed and at first thought it would be Robert Frost again, who lived down the road a piece and had formed the habit of using me to help fend off his insomnia, rather as Johnson did Boswell, except that I was never quite able to light stars like those in Boswell's eyes. No, the knock was too tentative.

It was the first visit of David Schubert, who had the worldly disadvantage of looking and behaving exactly like a poet, even one in the Villon-Vian-Verlaine tradition, only quieter.

Question

Last night I heard a thrush sing from some rare
Cloud gathering of pine;
While in pale grass
Dull things held mass
I struggled on that pain full air.

He sang how the wind smoulders in the wood
Pulsed pain throbbing on every wave,
What friend dare brave
Perilous gulf, flesh and blood?

I listened sharply but I heard no answer—
No doll of morning star caressed me,
No fond hand blessed me.
Still the song thrilled on the nervous air.

THEODORE BAIRD (Amherst teacher) 1948

David Schubert entered Amherst in the fall of 1929.

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

David had enrolled himself among those who, having offered to show his verse to Robert Frost, was asked by our poet in residence if he would not rather show it to me! (Frost had carried avoiding action for all academic demands to a high point of perfection.)

Poem

While the valley was blistering baby suns
And night, come smoking from an indigo forest of hills,
Charred the bright argosies that slice the heavens,
You served dynamic words that scratched like mills
The dumb air, wasped the quiescent air. My thought
Elusive as the complex soul of birds

Was convict in my mind. Then it was caught
And strangled, pedantic Caliban, by herds
Of tiger-breasted words. Could I have reached
Beyond the smoky jungle which obtains
Near the unblemished stars I might have wished
This pain away. But you remain
With your complacent nymphs and deity
While I encounter goblins in my tea.

October 24, 1929: Boom, fed by unprecedented securities speculation, leads to stock market crash.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

He was very timid, and very poor. At Boys High School, Brooklyn, he had had a good record, graduating in the first quarter of his class, with a 91 in Virgil, and although the meager documents on which the college could operate in those days do not tell why he chose Amherst, they do contain a question and answer about his reasons for seeking an education—he wanted to be a writer.

Cortez

The clean sun melts hands earthy and brief,
The fierce star, pure element, changes old grief
To cherished whisperings that ebb in the heart.
Echoes decorous, needful, there flourish. No part
Murmur the moss grown bones of Cortez
In the dim sanctuary. And what redress
For the hopeless gods and outcast cause?
Montezuma scatters into grass toothed jaws.

What do you see wheeling on the sea storm,
Sailing white winged to this our native home?
The inviolate chrysalis, the old world worm
Crawled from the wharves of Greece and Rome.

Marina snored. Flies buzzed on her breast.
And palm trees waved fans on the heavy and sweet
Southern dew.

What has become of Cihuapan,
Of Colzatli, of brave Contzin?
And Montezuma famous for valour?
What of these people all royal and fair?
Their substance is vain and my very words vain,
Empty of breath, as dry grass thin.
The singer Nexhol and his song are dead,
Who knows the bitter anguish, the words he bled?
Though he told all things that ever man did
The singer Nexhol and his song are dead
And now I know for myself.

Marina laughed, showed her teeth when she laughed.
And Cortez touched to the quick also laughed,
The palms filled with murmurous laughter
As they lay on the warm field.

Montezuma took no stock in Christ
But the advent of Quetzcoatal, God, was plain;
And artful Cortez nursed that craving.
So, whither thou goest I will go, Cortez,
And where thou lodgest will I lodge,
Where thou diest will I die
And there let me be buried.

As a bird in cage thou longest
In the heavens to wing thy way.
Be still, my heart, be still.
The shadows drift through my eyelids.

The sun is soft, the sun is far
As the body of my beloved.
Be still, my heart, be still.

Their fluent hands solicit the funeral song.
The sorceror calls to aid his jewelry—
But the present whets their lavish appetite
And the stranger serpent prepares to bite.
The glitter like silver in the dazzling sunlight,
The armour clad soldiery and Spain's great knight:
Renounce the falsehood of idolatry,
Commune with the safe true God.

Now the fatal fire spent, the irons were moved
From the humble Mexican king.
But the pretext was manifest, and Montezuma loved
Death when his people cried
We want Montezuma neither living nor dead
We want no puppet ruling.

Portents of gloomy presage fulfilled—
May God keep tally of the lives gold killed,
May God give Cortez and his men the day,
Rich lands and broad to regale their stay.

North winds blow low hills of sand,
Pile high the dirt, cover him up!
Montezuma is part and parcel of land
Involved in dream.
This is of dust and shadow here,
Resolved is all ever sweet and fair
In the waveless tide of corruption.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

Already as a freshman he was experimenting with language, playing with words, turning them round, letting them slide off into other meanings. This passion consumed all his attention, so that when he was carrying a tray about as a waiter or when he was sitting over a mess in the Biology Lab, his head was filled with sounds and rhythms and phrases, about Cortez and Montezuma and Gaylord Street and Orion and children playing and orchids.

Old Story

On Gaylord Street I walked the long night down
While light blue snow with muffled breath breathed
Coldly upon my cheek. Star fire wreathed
A hemlock tree whose ghostly gown

Shown brightly. But of night I had no part,
No frost flame burnt me as I wandered nor
Did equal wind so much as move, gather
The ruined leaf from the bare heart.

You, my dear, when absent brought to mind—
Quicken the sleeping seed and birds come back
And hang bright globes of song upon the slack
May murmuring of soft sweet wind.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

A well-adjusted student learns the language of a course and a teacher and speaks it at stated times and places, but David Schubert had only one language, the one he was exploring with such inward delight, and he used it on all occasions, whether writing a poem or a history paper or a botany quiz. The results were astonishing and his teachers were perplexed. Meaning was discernible behind the apparent nonsense, so that the question could

be asked whether these playful variations were really as objectionable as the familiar jargon of the ordinary student. Yet could one be sure that in the rush of words the necessary facts were substantially embedded, could one be sure he had done any of the reading?

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

Dave was a dedicated poet in the sense that he conveyed an interest in nothing but writing poetry: not in his class-mates, not in the curriculum or teachers .... He gave the impression always of not possibly being anything but a poet, and one to whom it didn't greatly matter whether he was published or not, though I did sometimes find myself wondering how he would live.

I was such a raw teacher then, no doubt I was too "glad" to "teche," thus exposing myself to Dave's suspicion that I was among those who would *guide* him.

Wanda

Did you rise, Wanda?

In the green April years of the old world;
Pearled from the sea, diaphanous of day,
A damp articulation of fleeting clay.

Your eyes dream

Through sun fringed lashes jewels of sapphire shine
To dazzle weary orbs ... The sun still broods
Now in a nest of hills but never druids

With beards that snow,

Or goddess longer stand on this old world.
A timeless moment though, above thy breast
I brood on that swift precipice of rest

In ecstasy.

The antique grief is scarred by vain tomorrows,
But warm and racked at your consuming gaze
My blood burns, eyes are blurred by your bright face,
And I forget the march of dreary days.

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

When I would venture the faintest reservation about the melody or imagery of a line in a newly minted poem of his own that he showed me, he would smile with the humility of a junior seraph and, without a word said, tear the page in two and with a flourish deposit it in the waste-paper basket, to signify that this marked the end, not just of that line, but of the whole poem.

Morning

Wanda, open to the light,
The sun beats on your eyelids. Fed
On dusty dew of dreams all night
Now day and my desire plead

Put on your smock and weave your hair,
Pattern and shape the golden cords,
Play softly murmured music there
And let your small hand cup the words.

Care free let us gain the hills
Of Pelham and a pine bed find,
While in the azure stadium fills
The blue cloud and the wordless wind.

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

At least three of these self-destructs, however, I later read in print ....

JAMES HAYFORD (Classmate) 1962

This slight, shy freshman in his relatively short stay, proved more interesting to his teachers and college-mates than any other member of his college generation. He had come to get the education he needed to be a writer, and he meant business ....

Invitation

Come Wanda, see King Richard hump
Through lanes of tangled history.
Said Wanda, "Is he really that?
I hate men who are ugly."

But knights there glitter chivalry,
And maidens lightly globed there act
With Lords from the Atlantid sea.
She, "The place must be packed."

Perfumes of Paris shall enfold you,
And mulberry green that silkworms gore
Who nibble nights through a blue moon.
Said Wanda, "What a bore."

But strictly words shall prison you,
The action spell you in a trance.
She, "I am awfully sorry, John—
You see, I'm going to the dance."

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

As a freshman he got good marks—92 in History, 90 in Latin—but adjustment between doing his lessons, earning his living by performing the usual menial jobs, and satisfying his urge to write, would not have been easy for even the most perfectly poised personality.

Dream

Did a timeless tide throw up dead hopes,
Shimmer white sails ghostly in the mind
For a space of time never to be reviewed?
The moon shone vainly from a vacant sky
That night I resolved your face from chaos.
I knew why men had fought a world war
Far away on the plains of windy Troy,
Why startled by your dazzling beauty
They gladly gave their lives for you.

But now the candle stoops, tall shadows flare,
And the frost falls thick as prayer upon an altar ...
With folded breath we shall not walk again.
The passive moon, eroded, lingers where
Your legend eyes once wandered.

Am I the dream or you, evolved of mist,
Form imaged by the eye of some desire
Abstract of value and wind-void of purpose?
Eddies of pattern on sand silly shores.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

I still remember the autobiography he wrote for me in Freshman English ...

DOROTHY LETWIN (Sister) 1980

David was born October 18, 1913, in New York, because my mother went home to her family to have her children. Both my parents were born in Russia.

1913: Wilson elected president by electoral majority, but popular minority. Opposition candidates: Roosevelt, Taft, and Debs.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

... the autobiography he wrote ... revealing a background of family insecurity and poverty ...

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980

We ... lived in Detroit, Michigan ... due to the fact that my father worked for the Ford Motor Company. Even in those days, there were lay-offs, which caused finances to go topsy-turvy. We were poor, but we owned our own home.

ANONYMOUS FORD WORKER 1926

It's not human—break the spirit of an elephant, it 'ud. I'd starve before I'd go back! They don't give ye no warnin'. Pick up your tools and get a clearance, the boss says ... "cahn't use ye to further advahntage"—then you're done ... then ye can't get a job anywhere else, because if ye try to, they call up Ford's and they tell 'em ye're still on the payroll.—Edmund Wilson, *The American Jitters*

June 28, 1914: Serbian Nationalist Assassinates Archduke Ferdinand

David was a beautiful child with long, black eye lashes, blue eyes, black curly hair, like his mother. People stopped to stare.

July 29, 1914: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia and Russia, inciting the world to war.

Night Piece

The little candle poked a little fist
To push back the stalled dark which coffined him
In a small void of earth, walled from the world,
Numbered, defined upon a poor slum street.
The green light creaking through the creviced shade
Was beautiful, he thought, aware of wonder,
And Jewish children with sharp ragged talk
And hands that sprawled all over clattering by.
He yearned for the old stairs to mutter "She
Is come from work at last, is come at last."
But lonely in the room he let his mind
Bubble and break and bubble memories.
He could remember rain on the young air
And pent up buds heavy and taut with strain,
Though there was death on his face blood coursed red
In the white calcium garden of his brain.
Who gathers the ruined rose, he darkly dreamed,
Do hyacinth swing soundless bells of blue
That dream of Lesbos? Had it ever been
Or was it the phantom broidery of thought?
That childhood garden where tall poplars stood
So vain and poised as girls caught in a frieze
Who shudder soft and secret intimacies,
Where lilies like white nuns in cloistered quiet

Huddle against a privet hedge .... The diet
Of fish smells from the next room broke his dream,
And now her foot sounded a lagging beat
Echoed in the dark chamber of his brain.

1917: Bolshevik Revolution
Breaks Out

THEODORE BAIRD 1948
In the autobiography he wrote ... he spoke of himself with objectivity and humor ...

May 1, 1917: Submarine Sinks
American Tanker

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980
They said David was an unusual youngster, and, no doubt, indulged. Once in Woolworth's, he wanted something so desperately that he fell upon the floor kicking up such a tantrum that his mother finally gave in.

February 1, 1918: American
Troops Now on Battle Front

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980
My father used to draw and he even wrote poems.

Boy of The Arrowy Thoughts

If I stretch my arms so high
They top the little ivy
Father planted on my dormer window.
White and shiny like a nun,

Hear it pant, aspire to heaven—
Lift high and strong its green.
Wish I were an ivy tree
To kiss, hold hands with sky
Bye and bye

Head is a terrible doctor
For ache and chills I feel,
When it bullies me for answer—
"No, sir" and I kick my heels.
When it rains too much inside me
Like a swallow serenading the rain
My heart flies out. Maybe
Words of the swallow are mine.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980
David never talked about his family unless I asked. But I think his father was very severe and his mother quite meek.

A Small Girl And

Father tells me you moved away, don't know where—
I'll see you again but I mustn't bother ...
Are you sleeping like me in a white bed,
A yellow moon trying to climb in over your head,
And my picture on the wall, and father's too?
Your picture is on my wall you know.
Does a sparrow wake you with a dapper
"good morning, you"
And easily dodge the pillow you throw?
The morning glory outside is a big sleepyhead,
When I get up at eight she's still asleep in bed,
Eyes shut tight, tight as your umbrella in the hall—
Don't it ever rain where you are, not at all?

Can't you write a postcard if a letter is too long.
If it isn't convenient
Miss Emily can arrange it.
Miss Emily arranges everything.
When I ask was she crying?
No, she says, she wasn't crying.
She turns so I won't see ...

No, she says, she isn't crying.
But I think she is.

1920's: Harding Administration—new isolationism and nationalism; freedom of private enterprise from government restraint and government subsidies to business. Farmer and working-man do not share the prosperity.

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980

As a youngster, David sold newspapers after school .... Then, when he was 12, our mother passed away, and our lives changed considerably. David and I went to live with my mother's brother, and my youngest brother, who was only 5, was temporarily brought up by other relatives.

1928: Sacco and Vanzetti Executed

["A hand is writing these lines
On your eyes for journeys
You'll never start for. They're
Transparencies. Wear rubbers
And you will be wise."]

"Peter and Mother"

MURRAY SCHUBERT (Brother) 1980

I think my father was a loner, certainly not a family man. He went from job to job.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

I still remember the autobiography he wrote for me in Freshman English, revealing a background of family insecurity and poverty unlike anything I have encountered in my Amherst classes .... He spoke of himself with objectivity and humor, and he did not tell me what I was to learn later, that his father deserted his family and his mother took her own life. Inner conflict there certainly was in this boy, and the desire to write which so interfered with his daily routine as a student existed with an intensity not to be expected in someone maintaining a precarious balance.

Memory

I feel the solitude of the house
Where your footfall does not sound.
Where are you now? who went away
Wordless, into the ground.

Elaine the white, and Helen too,
Dolls of the morning star,
Whose orbs of lust dazzled the sun—
Dead, long dead they are;

But you who were no memory,
Who were no breathless name—
Flicker in the mind's dark
Ghostly, a shadowed flame.

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980

David was always an excellent student; everything came very easily to him .... In high school, David was in many plays. At the time, he seemed to have a flair for this type of thing—not that he ever evinced a desire to be an actor, but he just thought of it as great "fun," and it provided an interesting outlet.

Meanwhile, he continued to make exceptional academic progress at school. He was the kind of boy who, though favoring English studies, would get 100% on Mathematics Regents.

We took it for granted that he would go on to college, which, of course, he did, winning a scholarship to Amherst. He did well in the beginning ....

JAMES HAYFORD 1962

David suffered as a child appalling poverty and insecurity. Entering Amherst before he was quite 16, he began at once to show his fascination with the sounds and meanings of words. As time went on, he insisted more and more on writing his papers, quizzes, and exams in his own more or less private idiom.

As a freshman I met him only three or four times in the hospitable clutter of his classmates' room—John Moore and Charles Mangam. They, I believe, fed him sometimes when he had nothing to eat and no money. I remember him vividly—an apparent vortex of stresses. As a young bourgeois with poetic leanings, I found his poverty imposing, and also his damning-the-world self-absorption. He was a college legend: it was said that he would hole up in his room for days at a time until he brought forth a poem.

Incidental

The voice droned on while they paid only heed
To dinner. "You are bought and paid for, all"
He said. The parenthetic eyebrows raised
On his friend Ulster's forehead. "Michael, sh!"
He whispered, "they will hear you."
Servants with soundless feet bring dish after dish
Disposed by greedy lips while Michael stood
Beside his chair and darted puzzled eyes
And blood flecked words at them. "I'm dying, gentlemen.
I tell you I am dying!"
Some one said
"We all must die but only you with words."
Whether he heard or not, no answer came
Or if it were, it came not to one man.
"Race the red blood till it jets and spurts from your lungs,
Flirt with words that scrape the edges and bounce
From your hard mask leaving you all untouched.
You are all bought and paid for, gentlemen."

In a silence broken by the soundless feet
Of servants he went on, "My father
Gave me his portion, left no residence
Of health. But I have lived on the kind hearts
Of my friends as a blood leech lives on blood.
Friends? friends? who come to choke your bowels.
My only solace in these pain racked years
Your antic greedy ways. Fools,
Grow tall till you are bent by superfluous days!
But here is little room for blame, for harsh reproach—
Not any man there is neither bound nor free.
You are all bought and paid for; dated from dust
Made radiant with gold. Nor more nor less
And still the small words crush the great."

They slackened with relief. No mention here—
So this their bill of fault, their great roll call

Of vice? The men laughed merciless at Michael
Who stood as stone, an inorganic thing.
When he pulled out a pistol, pointed it
At his own heart, a spasm of coughing shook him.
"Stop him," somebody screamed, "stop him!"

"Oh, no!
He won't do that, Christ no!" ... But Michael fixed
The gun's mouth to his heart ... And there was mirth,
Much laughter as the trigger clicked a stillness ...
He looked eyes unbelieving at the gun.

In solitude of the moved scattered chairs
When they had gone their laughing way, he walked
With hard precision to the mirror. What
He saw was blurred and indistinct ...
The image misted
As he fell on the dumb impassive floor.

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980

As time went on, David became consumed with his poetry. More and more, he thought of nothing but this, and when he went to the library to study, would wind up writing or rewriting his poems. At Amherst David met Robert Frost.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

Then in his sophomore year, David made the situation intolerable by not attending chapel and by absenting himself from numerous classes, and by the first of December he was dropped from the college.

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

After his terrible grades caused the college to drop him, I heard that he was managing to exist in Greenwich Village and that while there he attended a poetry reading of Frost's in the city. Evidently he was now more successful

in obtaining a hearing from the nation's leading poet. ("I'm the top of the heap," as Frost used to say to me with his croak of a laugh). I am guessing, but I believe Frost must have felt a kinship between the waif in Schubert and all those years of his own, past middle age, when he failed as a student, a school teacher, a farmer, a journalist, a mill hand, and especially a poet—only one poem published, the harmless "My Butterfly," before he took off for England and yet another rescue mission by Ezra Pound.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

Robert Frost, finding David in an audience at the New School, spent the late hours of a night with him in his tiny boarding house room, listening to him read aloud from a long poem about Faustus.

Faustus, The End (a revision)

There is no star, not a one, in the gloom
Where I wander lost in a maze of night,
No lantern, flint, or match to light
Me through life's labyrinthine room.
Shall I tell death's name as a rosary,
With laud and paean wait my doom?
I am resigned to death's starless gloom,
To the wormy premise and silent tomb.

True, I have bathed in the azure glare of stars—
But now I study rest, now I retire.
Too long I strained my soul for glaucous air.
Rode spaceless seas and burnt in miraged fire.
Where eagles, vision born, have failed, could I
There voyage, to rose-red cities of the setting sun?
Now let me, rooted, rend no more the clay,
The stolid grip, indigenous of life,
But travel in dream archipelagoes
Through poppied isles where dwell in bliss the dead.

What profit me this web of words,
Tedious fret of blood that locked in skin
Paws and stamps and chafes its stabled prison.

Why am I haunted by dream's uncertitude
Of beauty, half forgotten in the night
That hedges ever closer with the years?
Did a timeless tide throw up forgotten hopes
To shimmer white sails ghostly in the mind,
That mist vague might, O Helen, when I resolved
From swirling chaos your departed face ...
"This, this is Helen?"I could speak no more.
Responded with a smile your gentle eyes,
Life-warm they glowed ... Still smiled ...
And the moon roosted in an almond tree,
And you familiar as the moon itself.
I knew why men had fought a world war
Far away on the plains of windy Troy,
Why dazzled by a stolen star
They gladly gave their lives for sight of you ...

But now the candle stoops, tall shadows flare—
And lonely, Helen, the moon and I walk through
My garden bright with cold autumnal dew.
The frost falls thick as prayer upon an altar,
Coating with white death weak plants that falter
Into the awful abysm of decay.
With folded breath we shall not walk again:
The moon and I and Helen were fellow then.
The passive moon, eroded, lingers where
Your legend eyes, O sun enamored, were ...
Am I the dream or you, evolved of mist?
Formed, imaged by the eye of some desire
Abstract of value and wind-void of purpose—
Eddies of pattern on sand silly shores ...
Close the shutters and blind the light
Who foolish work in a sterile sun:
Has book-lored student or bibled knight

Cleared paths to that dark backward realm
Ever unknown without our ken?
From your tower of words descend and tutor me
Avid of knowledge, where past snows sojourn,
Where love is kindled, what bleak hand so rude
Snuffs out the glimmer of the blood-let day?

Astrologists who tinker over tube and glass
Restore the ruined year to present life!
Past resurrect: the spirit, love, hate, hope!
Shrivelled and charred my calendar renew!
And is your trade unskilled, you too
Who beetle over dark demonic bottles,
Are habited in blindness and are mute—
Who know the jig of dust may not refute
The awful logic of corruption?
And can no jeweller with mechanical fingers
Fix the pendulum, stay the clocks of time?
No, no! hands must plod their round, no meddling delay
The tide of this red sun who lazily paces
On the dim portal of the Orient.

You quacks and fakirs all, rapt crystal gazers,
Go shave time's beard with your ruthless razors!

The dawning sun, Helen, fires the field
Where, tapers pinched, goes night on grey smoke clouds.
In pageant pass my days: the youth who kneeled
Vassal to sphynx-faced truth: who, when resigned
To study that impassive form, discovered
Him promised to a dream of beauty. Helen:
Your dream clear eyes ... The years on weak support
Are lying ... I despair the heavy stress
Of time ... Now life sifts through my fingers like air
Into the void jar of infinite ether ...
If collier bank that star, here's gold more
Than water in the Rhine for ardency ...
But no fireman may stoke the waning star,
Retrieve from ash a breath warm glimmer.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT
TO PRESIDENT PEASE, AMHERST COLLEGE

11 P.M. Monday

Mr. Pease, I am both grateful and sorry—sorry that I have delayed answering you, grateful for oh so many reasons. I had thought to be able to show that the pudding was on the fire—but I am still looking for an oven.

To be more exact, I am playing a kind of tag with a publisher to be caught. I have spent the winters as most winters are spent—in and out of the frost, busily, wastefully, slippery, etc. Also writing a poem "Thebiad of John Doe." The title is really the most imposing portion of it. Heretofore, I have had some consolation in the unintelligibility (to others) of what I have written—but now I am utterly and totally confounded by the simplicity of it ...

Mr. Frost called last Wed., much to my surprise—I was hardly prepared for his visit, either—rather neither—anyway. He was very considerate—even asking me to read some of my poetry to him—which is certainly, in the opinion of several I know, the height of charity. He has been equally kind in loaning me some money until I shall get work or return to college. This I hope to do in Sept.

I dislike burdening you with a balance sheet dry as dust—but in all fairness to you, I must add that he has or is sending me $3 a week—I have mentioned this that you may not think I am attempting to cash in on friendship, or evidences of it.

I again thank you for what you have done and for your aid. By Mr. F.'s settlement and your ch'k I shall be able, if I am careful, to live until something turns up, without disquiet.

I shall look for a job of sorts—but it is difficult for me to obtain anything with any interest—or without it. The desiderata are a polished exterior and a Sunday outside wanted. Given an executive bootblack's execution.

D. Schubert.

P.S. In this, the holiday season, may I be

presumptuous enough to wish you as great a happiness as
you and others have brought me?

The Adoration

When Heracles came out of the holy city
He routed the Persian host in the wind of Heaven:
Dirtlike trampled them under, wrought death
stain without pity—
King Heracles, Saviour of men.
Beaten, humbled into kennels the people drew,
But eyes leaked jade hate through niches in the wall:
And a faded sun dimmed now the avenue,
And a faded sun shone on Chosroes' hall.

Where under painted moon lay the false god
Beneath star and cloud and tree his engineers had made:
By friend and slave forsaken, yet unbowed—
Behind an image of Christ, he plies his trade.
Immobile as coal he sat, that jewel daubed idol,
As silent as the moon, and save for eyes
That move an empty blood-shot circle,
Nothing proves him of mortal wise ...
And no minion bars the redeeming foot
Of Heracles, Saviour of Men—
But above the roof, as death so near, Three stood
Who listen and watch the scene:

"A shell is more strong than Chosroes, know, King, know
In your way you pay honor to Jesus, son of God.
Say you are mortal, peacefully shall we go
If you will swear, Clayborn, you love the God
As the child must love his father for his every word,
As the slave must love his lord in harness, servitude—
Or Chosroes King shall be sent beyond evil and good,
Chosroes King shall be food for the eager bird!"

Like blazing carbons burnt the eyes of King Chosroes,
Like the eyes of a wolf who tears warm flesh in the snow:
And he rose on his throne to spit in the low eyes
Of Heracles who horribly cursed his foe:

"Woe, woe is thee, Chosroes King, eternal woe!
There have been kings and will be after now—
Hoger, Airel, Jephet of Tawroe—
In Hell they burn, and in Hell burn thou!
Gloria patri, gloria filio!"

As a feather meets a crosswind, so doth he fall,
Yet heavily dumbly as a heavy ball.
A bubble, blown away, his splendour, throne, and hall.
Now shadow whitens the ruined stone, lizards
slimily creep, and night robed owls call.

While monks in the holy city kneel down and
softly respond
As it was in the beginning shall and forever be
Thy kingdom come on earth as it is beyond
This prison net wherethrough we blindly see.

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980

I went to see President Pease about David. President Pease thought I might help him.

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

Whether or not I am right about this link I was informed that on Frost's return to Amherst he alerted the college authorities that posterity could charge them with having cut a branch that might have grown full straight, the result being that the dean was so intimidated by this possibility that the regulations were stretched to readmit the exile.

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

At this crisis all, or nearly all, of his teachers appeared before a not unsympathetic President to appeal the case and while we could not promise that he would consistently write the four or five word sentence, usually verbless, of the normal undergraduate, we did say that we would see to it that he was physically present in his classes.

David was allowed to return to college the following year, but this time it was hopeless, for his marks at the end of the first term were so bad he could have done no studying at all.

JOHN THEOBALD 1980

I regret to say that the last word I ever heard of the freshman poet was that whereas before he had cut only some of his classes, he now resembled Shelley in cutting them all. At Oxford it was only atheism they objected to, at Amherst only absenteeism and consequent statistical failure to make the required grade average. Anyway, Schubert was once again required to absent himself from the college, this time for good.

Hunter

Remembering the sea where man has found
In wordless revery the beaded truth—
I wonder is my name another, doomed
For idle speculation by the tides?
How may dead moons of China yellow age
Be foiled of their mad poisonous allure?
When shall the belle bright star expend her passion?
Blood racing through my coliseumed body
Burns the same pain that Romans felt
Who gave their bright forms to feed Nero's mirth ...
If I might rest secure though profitless
In some vast abyss of the infinite mind
And break the orbit of returning days ...

When served unto the soviet of worms,
Is only then peace from blood's great distemper,
When dimpled waters play about the skull?
Oh, I am sick of watching busy minutes
Strut their recurrent circle and depart
While beauty flees me in a wood of words
And thorn and briar mangle me
And weaves, weaves spider ropes to choke me ...

Think of the dead, ignoble dead, the masses:
What is reality in time's dim eye?
The future never is, nor was the past—
Or if they were, are even in the grave.
And were it season to awake the dead
Who have long nightmared in the soil, were they
To answer questions infinite of life—
What worth, what value their response
Of treachery, shame, lust, the rape of death?
We grope in dark: and leechlike our deeds
Bleed out the heart. Down all the ages, all,
We knock on barred gates that may not open,
Pass through forbidden doors to find that zeal
Has left behind the Eden ... Man forgets.
Only the silent earth remembers. Tells
No word the secret stars ...
Daring no odyssey, on words, words, words,
We crucify this body of love.
The trivial tear grooves down the cheek into
Time's gutter where they mingle with the rest.

And though I go when the dew bites, with step
Deliberate and slow,
Seeking wild friends in the greenland, all dodge, all
Elude my tender hunt for passionless beauty ...
Now it is still, so still I can hear my breath
Unwind its fluid silver. A few stars,
Rigel, Aldebaran, Orion glow—
Hang bluely on the night. They never tire

Of the dark maculate earth that dulls below.

Now cowers fox in copse, no cat eyes burn
Through the leaf lashes of tall wood and plant:
A pigeon, poised midair, seems posited
In marble, a grey lifeless thing: nor stirs
Pine needle as the owl hoots: nor lewd
Do negro bats whirr: nor do crickets tin
Their tune on grass tight strings: nor wriggles hare:
Nor hang songbirds from ladders of green bough.

So misted with the sadness of regret
For that dream beauty imaged in the mind,
Weary of ardent ways, I come to you
White waves caught in the moon's great net.
O white waves lashing futile spite
Against the senseless coal black night,
You vainly strive to break the bonds
That tie you to your coral bed.

But must we bend as weeds in a rough sea
To time, to circumstance, to daily deaths?
Wind worried waves, moon haunted, succor me!
And as a bird moults feathers ragged and sorry,
By this sheer water let me shed all worry.

Into unfathomed ranges now I dive
Where from no man returns evermore—
Now with submerged sea-man shall I parley,
Hold sermon with the gracious maids of yore
Who charmed the sea wracked traveller in that hall
Where the Old Man holds court in beauty's thrall.

Oh that melodious rise and fall of song
Mermaiden sing, so dew cold on the tongue!
At last I hear them call through sea white fire,
And I follow, follow, the image of my desire.

1932: 15 million people out of jobs—1 in 4 of the labor force. Soup kitchens, tar-paper shanty-towns (known as "Hoovervilles"), people tramping the roads in search of work.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

... he was a poet! The poem he recited on that Monterey day was long, contained many references to mythological characters, and while I understood little of it, I was impressed ... here was a genuine poet. But I was completely smitten before David opened his mouth. I was overwhelmed by his beauty.

[The hills were lush
With rain and youth]

When the boys invited Molly and me, we stayed for lunch.

MOLLY WEINERMAN (Cousin) 1980

I can still remember his violet-blue eyes, his long dark curly hair, his shy smile, his delight with words.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Driving back to Otis afterward, we described the place we were moving to the next day, the three men took their leave of us, and that, I thought, was that. We had hardly moved into our new situation, though, when David showed up. From then on, except for meals, he was always with Molly and me.

[I loved her]

Then the two of us would go off together, lying on some damp grass along the Lake.

[I loved her not
For herself,]

Or David would return to my room, always leaving me at dawn.

[I loved her not
For herself, but for myself.]
"Monterey"

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I loved him in a way that I had never loved anyone else. Molly left at the end of the second week, but I stayed for an additional one. I can't remember David's telling me that he loved me, but he was desperate for my love and care; that need was insatiable, and I guess *I* needed his need.

At one point Charles, unknown to David, came to see me before breakfast one morning. He had to tell me that David was young and innocent, and he and John were concerned lest I lead him on—-hurt him.

Lunar

Blood racing through my body
Burns the same pain that Romans felt
Who gave their light forms to feed Nero's mirth.
If I might rest secure though profitless
In some vast abyss of infinite mind.
Is only then peace from blood's great distemper,
When dimpled waters play about the skull?
Must ever beauty flee me in the wood
And thorn and briar mangle me
And weave, weave spider ropes to choke me?

For where I go on that fruitless search
Seeking wild friends in the greenland,
All dodge, all elude
My tired communion.

Now it is still, so still I can hear my breath
Unwind its fluid silver. A few stars
Hang bluely on the night. They never tire
Of the dark maculate earth that dulls below ...
Now cowers fox in copse, no cat eyes burn
Through the leaf lashes of tall wood and plant.
A pigeon poised midair seems posited
In marble, a grey lifeless thing; nor stirs
Tin tune of cricket, whirr of bat;
Nor hang song birds from ladders of green bough.

Think of the dead, the ghostly dead, the masses ...

But misted with the sadness of regret
For that hopeless beauty,
Weary of ardent ways I come to you
White waves caught in the moon's great net.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I can't at all remember how we parted that summer. Although he took over my entire life during that short period, when I returned to Rochester and over the next year-and-a-half, except for maybe two notes that he scribbled to me, all I had to show for that lovely August dream were some snapshots that Molly and I took.

1933: Banks close to collapse. Some military prepared to keep things together if Roosevelt can't.

There was a short stint with the CCC which he found not particularly to his liking. His tastes were aesthetic, and here the concentration was on physical labor—a sort of army life in a forest, it seemed to me. He came back home for a while, then went off to the New England states where he continued to pursue writing.

Civilian Conservation Corps employed jobless males in reforestation, road construction, prevention of soil erosion and national park and flood control. Payment $30 per month. Employed as many as 500,000 at one time.

Advice

Lichen creep in Trebizond
Where work the worms' stout crew,
From stunted steeple now resound
The owls' curfew;

And Timour, Lord of all men
Who dwelt in holy land,
Like smoke of dew did they all fall
In death's massless hand.

Go to those woods where the adder glows
And partridge beat their drums,
Upon the vague wet dew there lie
Till death comes.

The drapery of moss is quiet
Where gently green winds blow,

And the honied lips of death bring balm
In that afterglow.

January 1933: Roosevelt's inaugural address: "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

The next few years remain sketchy. He was said, of all things, to have worked as a farm hand.

February 27, 1933: Burning of the Reichstag:
Hitler Comes to Power

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

In 1933, I had become engaged and was staying at my aunt's apartment in New York. In the bitter cold December of that year, my fiancé was visiting. Strangely, he was recalling the August evening he had driven to Monterey from New York, discovered me in David's arms, and had returned to New York downhearted.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang. In a work of fiction the coincidence would seem ridiculous, but there in reality stood David Schubert. Wet and shivering from the heavy snowfall,

[Paper sown
Between their skins and thin coats]

in a thin, frayed top coat, he grabbed hold of me when I opened the door. With my hand over his mouth, I took him to the end of the hall and whispered that he had to leave, that my fiancé (about whom he knew) was visiting me. He kept kissing my hands and face, insisting he would

go away only if he could see me the next day.

["Move, move on!"
They rise and creep below,]
"Lighthouse Mission"

1934: Dachau and other concentration camps are established.

David was covered with vermin; he had been eating in a soup kitchen, sleeping in a flophouse. He was hungry, he was cold, and he had no money .... David moved in.

That next day led into March, when we were married.

Before I met David, his one steady and most supportive New York City friend was Peak Crawford. Peak, who was seven years older than David, was always concerned about David's welfare.

PEAK CRAWFORD (Friend) 1980

At Amherst I considered myself an anarchist: what I was rejecting was the evil of life. I dropped out of College. And David was a rebel, too—we had an identity of the heart.

I didn't know David at Amherst; Frost sent him to me in New York in 1932. I remember that first meeting, for I was working at Brentano's, on the mezzanine. I remember David walking toward me. Immediately I could see his gentleness. I could tell at once. We became friends in five minutes. I could see that he was a good person, a beautiful person, kind and gentle. I loved him for his gentleness.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

While Peak never expressed open disapproval of us, I somehow got the sense that he did not quite approve of our living together before we were married (as I myself didn't); neither, as I recall, did he think it was a good idea

for David to commit himself to our union at his very young age and with no job in sight. Without any hesitation, however, he stood up for us at City Hall, and more than once he said that he felt that our marriage was a steadying, stable influence on David's life. I still recall how gently he suggested that David crop his hair just before we were married.

David was the embodiment of the romantic poet. Concerned only with his writing, he seemed to float on air; I felt as if I had married an angel. My parents, though, learning about our marriage through one of the Rochester papers, insisted that we come home. I took that trip fearfully, while David seemed sanguine. To my total amazement my parents wholly accepted David—perhaps they were relieved that I was at last married. Dad's first step was to get David a new suit; next, he and mother offered to set David up in any business of his choosing; but quickly they read David's silence, and, to their credit, they neither pursued the matter nor showed any concern about our future.

In fact, that was a completely peaceful and harmonious summer—David typing away at his poems, our long walks under the tree-umbrellaed avenues, picnics in beautiful Highland Park.

To Ra

Inarticulate plashing
Of rainflakes on the trees,
Myriad voices gnashing
A thousand agonies;

City streets paraded
By a regimental rain,
The nightingale serenaded,
Pursues his ancient pain.

Ale brown faces seeking
The over tardy day,
An old world grief is breaking
The privacy of clay:

"Sun, with your fevered arrows
Slay this owl black night,
Who wields ghost blows—
Ghost notes that blight.

Ruin the dream of mist
Or our seed might be scattered on stone.
Where is your golden wrath, O Priest,
Where is the holy sun?"

1935: Nuremberg Laws Deprive German Jews of Citizenship

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

The only disagreeable incident that, for some reason, sticks to my mind was an argument over heredity and environment David and I had. I can't imagine what precipitated the discussion, but he, speaking with the utmost authority, as he always did with me, insisted that heredity was all powerful. Lacking any confidence in my knowledge, I almost broke into tears. I was very upset at his vehemence.

Poem

Lift up your voice to a new song, you said,
I weary of holiday words and tinsel sheen
Pragmatic peacocks bewildering the head
Diaphanous days that never shall be seen—

You celebrate the core with paste pearls
While the real treasure sleeps within the oyster
Stars do not cackle like adolescent girls
Nor does the dawn rasp like a chanticleer.
Go, dip your pen in a less dense ink,
Discard taffeta phrases that shrill derision
The rigid orisons that crudely stink
Of labor. Say plainly what you vision,
Else be still ... What is then left to do
But repeat in naked language I love you.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Though I expected my husband to be *the* great poet, still it was with trepidation that I saw the summer fade and our return to New York draw near. No doubt I imagined I could find substitute teaching in New York—something I had been doing while living at home with my parents.

Meantime Molly had found us quarters in Chelsea, on top of a rooming house. Our slanting roof came down on two cheerfully curtained windows that looked west on the old backs of neighborhood houses and a firehouse whose clang was like that of a lighthouse.

Voyage

"Cover her face. Eyes dazzle." He closed the book
In his briefcase. He sighed, "Yes, she died young"
The words cast shadows in his starless mind
And he stared in the Hudson as if there
To find that lost face, that long lost desire.
The silver wake ebbed from the boat, he thought,
As my own life into a sea of days.
"Where are those emperies bejeweled with hope,
Beauty which binds frail breath to frailer body?
And where that vision brought in youth's fast scope
To darken in the beggared years of age?"

The green hills fade in green felicity,
Melt, fade, dissolve in wave on wave of tree;
Now Yonkers floats to Tarrytown, becomes
New wooded reaches and new citied homes ...

"What do you see there" a voice asked him,
"May I look too?" Startled, he noticed her,
Looked up at his inquisitor. But, when
He dragged his fascinated gaze from her,
He was attached forever. "Pardon me,"
She said, and turned to go. He watched her go
While the dead earth waved heaving panting by.
He must not let her go. No, he would stop her.
He would speak to her at once ... And so he did.

O golden mystery imperishable,
Attaining measure, measuring the day;
Beauty, perpetual missionary
To dark hearts of the light implicit life.
If ravished by the shining of that light,
Seduced from purpose man works evil deed,
No foolish hand must shadow beauty's name.
Praise beauty whence all wonder flows.

Bright ladies there have been, God knows,
Fairer and fair as you:
Elinore, Guinevere, and sweet Rhodope,
Helen, Leda, and Eloise true
To promises that graveyards keep
With no man there to woo the breath
From lips sucked pale by the lips of death;
But their bright memory shall never sleep.
And you, my dear, are such another
Who are the world to me.

Eternal Venus rising from many waters,
Where you stand life is green and ever new.

In Chelsea, that first year, while I was going to Bank Street College for teaching credits, our two main visitors were Molly and Peak. Peak came regularly to dinner, always bringing a chocolate cake from the Automat. Over dinner of eggs (for our first company I began getting them ready several hours in advance) or lamb stew, about eighteen cents a pound, and full of fat, David and Peak would talk about poetry or philosophy or religion; I would sit at David's feet in adoration, silently, feeling as ignorant as I was. I had been a very slow starter. David was a liberal education for me. Later we would dance to "Star Dust," "Melancholy Baby," "Good Night Sweetheart." Peak was a marvelous dancer in the Fred Astaire style; David moved awkwardly, but with abandonment and genuine enjoyment.

Voyage (Revision)

"Cover her face. Eyes dazzle." He closed the book
In his briefcase. He sighed, "Yes, she died young."
The words cast shadows in his starless mind
And he stared in the Hudson as if there
To find that lost face, that long lost desire.
The silver wake ebbed from the boat, he thought,
As my own life into a sea of days.
"Where are those emperies jeweled with hope,
Beauty which binds frail breath to frailer body,
And where that vision brought in youth's fast scope
To darken in the beggared years of age?"

The green hills fade in green felicity
And the dumb earth waved heaving, panting by
When, when he saw whom he had never seen
Yet imaged always in his heart. He must tell her.
He must speak to her at once ... So he did.

Bright ladies there have been, god knows,
Fairer and fair as you:
Elinore, Guinevere and sweet Rhodope,
Helen, Leda and Eloise, true
To promises that graveyards keep,
With no man there to woo the breath
From lips sucked pale by the lips of death.
But their bright memory shall never sleep.

And you, my dear, are such another
Who are the world to me.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

After being dropped twice from Amherst, David probably thought CCNY would not accept him as a student. I'm sure he wouldn't have tried. But I, feeling that he should finish his degree, found my way to the University. In the waiting room that hot fall morning I sat for two hours, with a long line of students, before I was finally ushered into the Dean's office. Like a loving mother I outlined David's history. The Dean responded with warm sympathy. If David could pass the Latin and Greek entrance examinations, he would be accepted. Without studying, David graded in the 90's on both, and again he was a student.

[I see my name baaing
At me, like the blackest sheep of all.
All my associates have a great many
Degrees, BA wags after me
Like the can on a beaten cur's tail, reminiscing
Of cruel boys' victory.]

"BA (On the Same Theme)"

Not that I ever saw him open a book for his classes.

At CCNY David met Jules Bloom, a brilliant young man interested in philosophy.

JULIUS BLOOM (Friend) 1980

David was working at the library of City College. I remember warm weather, eating a sandwich outside, and talking. It may be he was taking a course. We became very friendly. The year must have been 1935, in the spring. He was writing poetry.

[She hugs a white rose to her heart
The petals flare—in her breath blown;]

JULIUS BLOOM 1980

My wife (who worked as a laboratory biologist) had also been writing poetry, and immediately there was a kind of kinship. She had written a poem called "David of the Sleepless Eyes" before she ever met David Schubert, and she said *there* is David of the Sleepless Eyes. Our relationship was very close and very warm. I loved him as a brother.

[The flower rooted in the bone,
The face at evening comes for love;]

But where he was more truly the poet, my studies were in philosophy. We had rather contrasting ways of arguing. He called me Mr. Grunt, and at one point I took him to task for that.

1935: Roosevelt's Second New Deal: better use of national resources; security against unemployment, old age, illness; slum clearance.
May: Italy attacks Ethiopia.

[Reeds in the river meet below.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

That summer David hitch-hiked to Rochester and from there we went to the summer camp job I had that added $400 to my salary.

[She sleeps small child, her face a tear;]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM

June 23, 1935

My dear Mr. Grunt, I would like to write also to Miss Unspoken Poem, but writing to two people at the same time, even if they are almost one, is like walking in different directions at the same time. So I hope Emma will not be too put out at this most brief salutation. Honestly, that Greek oral tradition has its points but they don't fit in with Interstate Trucks, and I'm afraid you may have had a hangover—for that's what introspacialization is (isn't that almost German for remembrance of things past, and much much preferable to introspection?)—but we'll put that down to profit and loss.

Well, my strenuous truck by a multiple fission turned into a Japanese Ford with only a 75% student in Latin, art under Hammond, and Edna, dear little domesticated lyre, Conrad Aiken, and the Sonnet by Shakespeare, Past reason hunted, etc.—from Westchester County, Saw Mill Road, two Negroes from Bates delivered me: then a truck to Poughkipsie and from there on, straight going. It took two days and about eleven miles foot wear, but it was worth it. Off Poughkipsie, in the Midway Gas Station, I had a shower, supper, and spent five hours waiting for the Lord to bring in a Rochester truck. Meanwhile, it was raining cats and dogs outside, a truckman with a baby face and a big cigar was dancing all over the place goosing everybody (except me). He stopped short, and picked something. I waited—it was a butterfly. He went around to everybody, saying isn't that a pretty—ain't that a pretty, I should say, even to a broken down clothing salesman who

was wrangling a gas suit out of the owner, with an insistent emblem in orange. Then he blew it into the air, watched it a moment, and went back to his fun.

Judith's mother is a hero. After an operation that would have put a locomotive out of business, she's back as ever, with her old faces. She told no one about it, and referred to it casually as her vacation. When the neighbors heard—it isn't a cancer but all she's left with is a stomach, I guess, and a heart—they almost wept the phone to pieces. And such flowers!

To liven matters up, I've been typing an old essay on Free Will and Determinism for Mr. Ehre. You can judge which side wins—yes, I advised Santayana, but he's past him, and got there before Santayana was in diapers. I'm full of can we choose our parents, our nation and our income, so if I sound very very mechanical that's why. Finally finished that thing I told you part of. I think it's out of the thing stage, but I shall be glad to show it to you, for your delight!

It may be possible for you two to stay a week end at Wicopee Springs Camp. If there is any chance, and you wish to go, I'll send you the dope.

In my off moments I've been rereading *Crime and Punishment.* But I find it stifling a little. And overdone. I have convinced Judith of the necessity of seeing *The Informer*—and we're all going to see it, the third time for me—tonight. One of Judith's ex-suitors, now is it respectably? married and his wife—are going with us.

Have you started your ordeal of discovery yet? So far, I have two different poems up my sleeve, but I'm afraid when I put on the stovepipe and try the magician act of writing them, they'll turn into rabbits. Better luck for you.

Sincerely
David Schubert

You must pardon the stupid typing—but Poughkipsie doesn't deserve any better. Next time, I promise a stenographer's dream.

[The dream comes in with stars to go
Into the window, feigning snow.]

August, 1935: Roosevelt Signs Neutrality Act

JULIUS BLOOM 1980

We talked a great deal about Greek philosophy: Woodbridge's book *The Son of Apollo*— a book that no one knows—and Plato. David was a kind of a Platonist, but not in the finished, intellectual sense.

[The paper wall holds mythic oaks
Behind the oaks a castle grows.]

David was a prodigious reader, and we became a kind of sounding board for each other. I remember David having an absolutely delicious sense of humor. You didn't feel a sense of tragedy in him. Intensity, yes. But you also felt that he was a man basically of a good humor—he would see humor in a situation others would pass by.

[Into yourself, live—Joanne!
And count the buttons—how they run
To doctor, red chief, lady's man!]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM
Wicoppe Springs Farm, Hopewell Junction
Dutchess County, New York. [Summer, 1935]

(you better use every syllable or the postmaster will refuse to be a go-between).

My dear Jules: I have laid your letter aside in this jungle of books and papers from which I have at last emerged with a little headache, much cigarette smoke in my mouth,

and "The Son of Apollo" by Woodbridge. Which is the best book on Plato I have ever read—leaving out the first chapter which is the worst *life* imaginable, and his "ideas"which only flit like bats at certain twilight pages. There are a few sleights of hand in it: in the discussion of Education(the Protagoras) from a proof of geometry's desirability (a case in principle, not point), which is excellent, to a hiatus and a sky perch for the soul's miracle, all after a most sensible discussion of the necessity for understanding the world, laws etc. This soul grace, which I take to mean nothing but the olden Conquer thyself first, Old Adam, is vitiated by a few drops of baptismal water: but it is really a wonderful book.

But to return to your letter, rather I should say Salutation, for the beginning so completely impressed me that I shivered for days before I dared ask myself what it all meant: and now I must take it out to see if I do ....

Oh yes! Dear Mr. Grunt, as I was saying ... but that's really unfair, so I'll talk back. First of all—if you associate pigs with grunt, why then I'm *very very* sorry, but that's *your* association .... Secondly, your criticism of Proust, James, and Dorothy Richardson while quite 1935y, hits below the belt. For though it is of necessity selective writing, that does not contradict its end which is to reproduce something of the supposed Freudy Boygy Man, anymore than the manufacture of organic compounds in the laboratory refutes their organic nature (composition, to be more accurate). And although looking in the soul, even at four A.M. on a Washington Square Bench, with two cat eyes from an imitation Georgian building is out of date in today's quest for object and method, still one has to remember that there is a subject to be adapted, and mere environment is like an icecream diet, enticing but leads to the hospital. But you were not speaking of that I believe, to put words in your mouth but which you don't say, I can't help feeling your quarrel isn't with our sad metaphysical soul, but history which is not understood. But let's allow me to prescribe another book. *Tom Jones* by Fielding.

It's out of place in today, but if you can get a tree, ease, a package of Chesterfields and a lot of patience, you will discover one of the most amusing and sensible books ever written. The last chapter is a prodigious masterpiece of narrative, I don't mean anything tragic or skyey, but *so* amusing, and keeps you on your toes every second. If you can't get a tree in New York, but you've probably read it, I will try to get you a small willow here; so far no luck. Judith and my own hopes have been since we had your letter for your arrival; but this place is so upset, farmers, children, counsellors that there's very little room; but you must let us know when your vacation starts: the fare here is only 1.25 round trip by boat: only a few hours: and Judith wants very much to see you, Emma and you, and if we have to build a house we'll find a place for you. I spoke prematurely about Mrs. Ehre, there was an infection: and we didn't know if we'd be able to come, but now thank heaven, all is well.

I am going to read Lucian tomorrow: Elwyn the owner was a professor or teacher somewhere and has an excellent collection of Greek and Roman literature, and a few thousand fine books on history—in fact all the sciences, especially the is it called human?

Now honest, I didn't write to put you in that delightful feeling of the late guest's importance. So please ... but I forgot. At last I've had my first pome accepted, by *Poetry*, ["Kind Valentine"] it will be about two or three pages I hope, it's much longer in my dreams. And Judith has had a story, light but very lovely, accepted by *Tanager:* which if you haven't heard about you'd better before you come here, I mean the Magazine. Love to the microbes, may they prosper under Emma's loving care, to the cat whose condition is perhaps "critical," and to you and Emma my Sunday hello.

David

[While the low sobbing band—it wept
Violets and forget-me-nots.]
"Kind Valentine"

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM

Wednesday, 1935

Dear Jules,

I feel sure as my shower which I'm just going to take to wake me up, after the incredible romance I found Zimmern's "Greek Commonwealth" to be, that our letters will cross in the mail again, so this is a note, not a Letter, and just to tell you about a very dear friend of mine [Peak], whom I hope you'll meet, in the City. Three years ago he started a two year plan for a book of criticism he is working on. It was comprehensive, lingual, French, Italian, German, social and religious. The only trouble was that it presupposed a machine, for every minute was calculated, and although Jeu-Jitsu squeezed in, and a weekly visit to either a dance-hall or a marathon (for understanding LIFE), it was terrible, treacherous and haunting. Two years ago when the Russians likewise found that Paradise kept growing horizontally, it grew to a five year plan. And all this after the book itself had as I understand it been written. For the past year we have only spoken of it like a dead neighbor, a next door roomer whom we had grown to like for his long beard in an age of obstinate Gillettes, or a cup of tea one casually asks one's visitor to, smothered in a yawn and a blink of the eyes.

So let this Translation not bring you any nostalgia for efficiency—but how silly! for as Johnson said, he had written so much because he was so abominably lazy—and we're all in the same boat, heaven knows—all of us who do more than be the Bright Boy of the Wonder Age. I will write you altogether a new letter, when I get yours, so don't get your knife out to scalp me.

I am terribly sorry about your rheumatism, and City heat and filth. Judith suffers from it too (the rheumatism, she was once very very sick), and our best hopes for ease and Heartease to both of you with lots of leisure and no unemployment.

In Greek (it's Zimmern who taught me) the two words mean the same, but New York isn't Athens, and the more

shame for New York, if it doesn't turn into something pretty soon, and not electricity and noise.

David

JULIUS BLOOM 1980

He was a very strange combination of a haunted person and one of really infinite wit, slightly self-deprecating, but with very little malice in his humor. He did not attach his humor to a person so much as to something that grows out of a verbal context. In his own very private way, he was a person who seemed to be much in the moment—not, of course, the public moment, but the private moment.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM

August 11, 1935

My dear Jules, I think some people, parents if not people, on their visit to their children, will take this letter to N.Y. and so I am writing on the spur of my intention. It is not for disappointment I have not written, but I have been in that vicious circle of late wakings, 8:30, and late hopings-for news from *Criterion* to whom I sent something. But it's two months now, and no news, and if I don't write to you, I'm afraid you'll think I've been frozen into silence. Of course, both of us were *real* sad that you weren't able to come, but a boat trip on a rainy day was like taking a ride to Frisco in [the] Civil War, and your discretion and our own, if it did put the lie in the Weatherman's face, was wise. But this is to ask if the elements are willing and you two elements too, perhaps it would be possible for you to take the trip here this Sunday the 18th or Sat. the 17th. If it isn't there is a small but growing hope we may be in the City, and if we are and to quote the James Version of the Bible and your desire is toward it with the style of Waldo Frank, to quote Munson's criticism, with all verbs we shall be there, at the back of time's chariot to quote Mandeville[!]. Whew! that sentence reminds me of one of Stark Young's mementos of Internationality, with his Italian-french-english-german quotations in his early novel of

Manhattan Literary gangdom.

Have the bugs behaved as kind to Emily, since her elevation, as when she was, tell her I was going to say—one of the unsaid poems struggling in a test-tube? You did not say whether she had got it, but your celebration was grand and though I pity Emily's fate and the suppers at your hands, I do hereby (because I think I haven't yet) commend both of you to felicity.

The days pass here with book after book down the gullet, and cook after cook too, for my appetite has grown gargantuan, and if you are able to come, perhaps we shall cook out, and then you will see what the winds do. If you haven't eaten bacon or steak on air, with a few cinders attached to each piece, and a few fingers lost in the fire trying to hold the pan, why, you don't know what life is.

I came with such serious intentions to read Spanish, but I've been increasingly American, if only in spelling. I'm working on a long thing that's all thing now and no form, but I hope it will come out, and I set a year or two for it. I've just discovered what's wrong. If I'm ever to do anything longer than a sigh, I have to get up early and go to it. Like Alexander I'm weeping that I've got no world to conquer but no nights, for I absolutely must get up at five which is my MIDYEAR RESOLUTION ONE, and if you hear a knocking at the door in the winter, you'll have to rise in the snow and go with me for a walk, so I'm preparing you.

To the ubiquitous and spawnful Cat my best regards and hope for a Pioneer Progeny. But for us, division is mortal, and let's cling to ourselves till we know the road. Which means in the language of the Times, if you can come up by swanroad, wheelroad, letterroad, or phoneward, we shall both be very glad. I must lay all these terrible puns to the ghost of Banquo and Squire Western's truculence, but your visit is no ghost I hope, but real.

Regards to the books, pens, and Spanish bibliography,

David

MOLLY WEINERMAN 1980

Each month David had a note for Judy: wear a ribbon in your hair, dress in green, be my Judy June-Bug.

[Kind hearted girl, of flowers the mignonette.]
"Looking for a House"

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

We moved to Brooklyn Heights, David found us a one-room apartment in a neighborhood where Hart Crane had lived, and where many writers and artists were finding a haven.

PEAK CRAWFORD 1980

I always disapproved of the Hart Crane influence on David's work, the opaque quality of the poetry. I liked best David's simpler, short lyrics.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Peak had been a frequent visitor to Frost's home, and on one occasion read E.E. Cummings' poems to him—the first time Frost had heard them.

1935: T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

PEAK CRAWFORD 1980

I was the one who had the manuscript of all those poems David had put together and dedicated to Robert Frost. They were very early poems. He didn't keep many of them. I don't think he knew that I had kept them.

I got a teaching job at a private school in Brooklyn. We did lots of walking, any place that our two feet would carry us. Wherever we strolled, in Central Park, The Battery, through the East Side, David's antennae were ever on the alert. Not that he would say much but out came his match pad for his scribblings.

[lovers, like ants
Are scurrying into any old darkness,
Covert for kisses.]

"Prospect Park"

Our favorite walk was over the Brooklyn Bridge, often deep into the night, taking in the arabesque scene of the entire harbor, ending up sitting under it, often in a wild snow storm, or watching the dawn move in. We'd talk sometimes about my growing concern about the child's development, a subject that very much interested David as well. Frequently he would play on words or inject his extraordinary bits of humor. He was lying on the wharf beside me when he grew silent. I asked, "Meditating?" He smiled and returned, "Beditating." We rarely went to bed before three or four a.m., especially on weekends.

Poem

—Greenhorn a popcorn five cents a piece
Talk is cheap takes money to buy land!

The snow creeps into the river,
—They hardly know they are caught in that going.
Who has not heard—what man alive?—the road
Inside the sea—quite tired of its load,
Too old and too wrinkled to support that load?
There's no brass buttoned voice to trumpet out
The shellcracked and slimy rout.

Who has not heard—what man alive?—the road
Which tried a star, midair—
Dip with the eyes and hands and for
Ever and for ever—kelp
Barnacles, drowned pulp drowned core?

Now the night is hardly breathing, a
Thief is taking leave,
The screaming carousel. Panting horses,
And lions with their sticky smudgy joys—
They surge and fall. Christ! how
They love in this most loving snow!

As, under suns, electric,
Beads upon his brow—
The fingerman
Rifles the cashbox of paradise—
Foreclosed! O harvest gold—
Just out of reach arose.

"I beg you, Judy, take the desirable horse
For hills that gallop through a most unusual course.
—They once made a wish, remember? You once
Made a wish too. The green gown
Was a house, a window from which you could frown,
It was a light which you could nibble at.
You had a picnic of bright tulips on your hat,
You said, you said, 'It will always be like this,'
Spoken between a laugh and a kiss.
Won't you awake, my dear, and come with me?"

—But the dawn is blue across the Plaza.
But the year pulls like a kite.
But the number is 6 Joy Street.
But—precarious on the hill—a tottering light.
Her woolen lashes laugh a brouhaha,
She sips Tom Collins by sleep's flickering light.
The Persian Room reels into sight.

"I beg you, bleak alleyway,
And you, won't you, O wooden pistol
Riding over the Hudson, over my soul,
—Small muzzle, smaller smoking shadow—won't you
Shoot!"

—O sleeping seed!

"Crying—you want to get off? But you've
Just died! Indeed, all the tears are
Counted one by one, and safely filed away.
Respectfully dried that were respectfully cried.
... My vanity case hides
Between your old words that bleed in the night.
I wouldn't go through that business once more—
Not in a million years. Not for
Me, the torture, and my heart
Something that quite casually you hurt
And that you never noticed."

Did the trolley ever stop at
The cider mill? Does the factory wait
Reticent and sly
Avenger of the eyes
A child glues to the eternal window?
The earth, a factory hand,
Unwanted, creeps out of sight.

"Better watch your step! right now, you are passing
Pearl Street and Pearl's dyed hair.
A certain tilt of the head, the way
She said your name, holding it out on her lips—
And past last year's prayer.

"Roaring in your ears the surf—
A mouse wind it is, the minute is
A shell, O my beloved!"

* * *

Worried wives will soon feed
A whisperworld their bread and milk.
The clouds'
Skyscrapers
Waver.
Tapers weep.
The wind
Retreats.
It sighs spasmodically.
Digging its grave, to lie
—Poor lackblood!
Trampled by ghosts to slush and mud!

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

But occasionally David would go off alone in the middle of the afternoon. Hour after hour would pass. I had dinner ready promptly every day. When, by nine or ten he hadn't returned and the dinner was cold, I was frantic, nearly reduced to tears, in fear for his life. I never censured David. I really wasn't tempted to.

> [Full moon, and he is walking
> With letters in his pocket,
> A razor and a spool, a spool,
> Needle and thread.]

Moreover, I sensed that he wouldn't have stood for it. In any case, David always returned serenely, telling me about his journey on the Palisades. Once he described the policeman he saw attending a body washed up from the East River.

> [Full moon, and he is waking,
> The spray parted his hair
> Between the ooze and garbage,]
> "Pier I"

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM

October 9, 1935

Dear Jules and Emma—We thought you had moved and shut the door on the world, or that you had left your legs shopping (we were awful blue when we were moving) or that our supper had been terrible the morning after and no pick-me-up worked. So we're glad you are, even if in a paint can. That kitchenette smells good—but where in the world did you put it? I almost think you've made a long rolling door with collapsible book cases—and when you get to the end of the page—presto! you pull the books out (they're made of wood in my scheme) and turn the combination .... We were sorry to hear that your N. job had not come home, but if it's like my pomes, you just have to wait long enough, and the crows fly back .... J. and I want to see M. Chapdelaine—25 cents at C. de Paris—perhaps we can all make it .... Bet your place looks grand .... if the walls will let one escape after entering we may drop over Sat. Eve. to inspect ... Send a telegram if no. Or if you haven't the energy, a postcard.

Regards.

[MAGICIAN! CHARLIE CHAPLIN MOVIES!
FORTUNE TELLER! FLOWERS AND PLANTS FOR SALE!
...
SEDUCTIVE TUNES! IRRESISTIBLE ORCHESTRA! SAIL FOR THE BALI ISLES IN A DINNER PAIL!
ADULTS 50 CENTS, 25 CENTS CHILDREN!
FREE DIRECTIONS FOR THE LONESOME PINE TRAIL!]

"When Apples on the Lilac"

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

With my new job, and that additional one in the summer, David located a charming three-room attic apartment at 6 Pierrepont Street; the windows and roof commanded a magnificent view

[If the wind blows in the locust tree,]

of the tip of Manhattan, including the entire New York harbor, with New Jersey stretched out on the west. And as if that were not enough,

[The city, upside down in the gutter,]

our brownstone was set in a gate-enclosed small kind of Gramercy Park,

[Stirs and explodes in a pool of rain.]

where the tulip and other great trees blossomed not far below our windows.

[Here, in New York, when the bells are ringing
St. Francis into Convent Avenue—
City, dull or aflame, the sparrows sing.]
"West by the Rain"

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

We were back in the city. Often David read aloud to me from the up-coming poets—Eliot, Pound, Hart Crane, Marianne Moore, Stevens, Auden, Spender, as well as poetry translations of the French, German and Spanish writers. He was also reading the philosophers, particularly his favorite, Santayana.

1935: Poetry Book List: Kenneth Fearing, *Poems;* Edna St.

Vincent Millay, *Wine from these Grapes;* W.H. Auden, *Poems;* John Galsworthy, *Collected Poems;* Horace Gregory, *Chorus for Survival;* Charles Reznikoff, *In Memoriam, 1933;* W.B. Yeats, *Wheels and Butterflies; The King of the Great Clock; The Tower;* W.C. Williams, *The Broken Span.*

THEODORE BAIRD 1948

Schubert began to publish, and his poems appeared in *Poetry, The Nation, The Saturday Review of Literature, Partisan Review, Yale Review.*

1936: Russian Purges Begin
March, 1936: Germany Occupies the Rhineland

BEN BELITT *The Nation,* May, 1936

127,000,000 Poets

We are, according to the best statistical advices, a nation of poets .... John Masefield ... was moved to remark that here in America we were all either reading verse or writing it. What Mr. Masefield failed to notice was the matter of proportion: if, for example, one half would content itself with reading and the other half with writing, we should be well in sight of the regions of gold. The source of discomfiture lies in the fact that America's 127,000,000 poets are demanding representation all at once.

July 1936: Franco Leads Extreme Right Rebellion in

Spain with Aid of Nazis and Fascists

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT
TO MARYA ZATURENSKA GREGORY (Poet)

September 27, 1936

Dear Mrs. Gregory—I wonder where Mr. Gregory saw that poem of mine—and how he heard I have some interesting manuscripts—(although I do think they are at least that, and hope he'll think so too). Of course, I was greatly pleased, and surprised to get your letter. I am sending under separate cover in this mail a group of poems for him to select from. I don't by any means expect him to choose all of these but I hope that he will find some he'll be able to use for *Forum*.

Thanks for giving Edwin Rolfe my address—I shall be glad to hear from him, and look forward very eagerly for news from you regarding these.

David Schubert

P.S. I have moved around the corner to Pierrepont Street.

October 1936: Rebels Hindered by Siege of Oviedo
Loyalists Gain
Leftists Lured into Trap

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Among the staff at the Center Academy where I was teaching was the art teacher, Marcus Rothkowitz, his wife, the sculptor Edith Sachar, and Rebecca Lutz, the very able wife of Raphael Soyer. She was one of our nusery school teachers.

October 1936: Mrs. Simpson Asks Divorce

David and I were invited several times to visit Mark and his wife at their loft; it was large, sparsely furnished, with sculpture on mantels and pedestals. Mark, who later called himself Rothko, was very intellectual and sardonically humorous. On one occasion his good friend, Dwight MacDonald, was there. I don't think David said a word that entire evening. In fact, he always retreated to the background whenever we were surrounded by a group of people, particularly if David did not know them well; at best, wherever we were, David was rarely communicative. I liked to talk to people. But David was, and basically remained, a solitary person.

But he was interested in art. We would go regularly to the Museum on 53rd Street, which was even then gathering hordes of young people.

1936: Painting: Ash Can School. Painters: Jack Levine, Mithchell Seporin, Ben Shahn, Soyer brothers.

Rouault fascinated David the most. At the same time he kept returning to the Metropolitan Museum to sit and study his first favorites, Rembrandt and El Greco.

1936: Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*

And either we listened to recordings or we attended the Washington Irving High School series, fifty cents a ticket, which we could barely manage. And at holiday times we would go to hear a requiem or an oratorio.

November 1936: Roosevelt Re-elected
CIO Organizes Motor and Steel Industries
Sit-down Strikes

"Kind Valentine" appeared in *Poetry* in 1936, and won one of the magazine's prizes. In the April, 1937 issue, David was the lead poet, with three poems grouped under the title, "Here is the Street": "Crooked Road, Crooked Year," "The Lake," and "When Apples on the Lilac."

February 1, 1937: 13 Plotters' Pleas Futile in Moscow; All Will Be Shot.

On several occasions I tried to help David over his reticence. I secretly wrote to Ben Belitt, then poetry editor of the *Nation,* telling him how helpful was his acceptance of one of David's poems.

1937: Supreme Court Fight Invalidates Major New Deal Legislation

II

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT
TO BEN BELITT (Poet and Editor)

April 15, 1937

Dear Belitt—I want to thank you for your letter of—looking at it now—just one month ago—although I imagine you've forgotten about it, and me too, by this time. In any case, I hope you won't retaliate a month, by waiting too, although the reason I am writing is to agree with you, and agreement (as your note which I enjoyed reading very much) is delightful to discover, but somehow one seems after a correspondence to penetrate more and more into that perfect idea, which seems to be an ultimate silence.

But I must extricate myself from what seems even to me to be a little incoherent to tell you that I read with great amusement and pleasure your review of F-6 [Auden's *The Ascent of F 6]* today. I hope you won't think that my desire is a private target where, instead of flashing nudes and hitting them in adolescent places (have you seen the radio arcades on 14th St.?), poets are aimed at with pipe shots, but *F 6* is pretty terrible, so terrible that one can only predict a brilliant future for hunters of small game and forest wardens. I admire some of the English Indian Spring—but I can't but feel that it is too hortatory, too imagined to be imaginative or present. Your review seemed to me to be passionate and real. I agree about satire myself—perhaps that is why, but I must admit I couldn't get the swing of what Mr. Gregory was driving at. The verse seemed mediocre .... But one must even so admit ... boredom, which the latter doesn't .... Isn't a verse which is less intellectual (I too am echoing Yeats in this hope), but less queer, more exemplative possible? But it is probably bad for one who is as often missing, more often in fact, to wonder too much ....

Has it been warm enough to omit the tonsils—or are they still, as Original Sin is supposed to be, at the bottom of thought?

I also agree with you about parties—although I can't agree very much since I have only been to one—but I think they too could be omitted from the world without any loss except to the Hostess women (and men), and small, very small quarrels. I omit myself.

I sent some things to Mr. Gregory for his anthology (to which, by a roundabout method I was asked to contribute). I wonder if he likes them with a roundabout or straight liking. If you hear anything I should be glad to hear.

Well, there seems to be only waiting and waiting, and action only far away .... It is the Sonata in the Key of F Major, by Mozart. Try to hear it sometime ....

Sincerely,
David Schubert

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

It was on one of his many walks that David found a second-hand piano standing for sale outside a furniture store in Harlem—a very good piano, as it turned out. With *Poetry*'s hundred-dollar award David bought the piano. Sometimes an entire evening I played and we sang.

[She is playing, *The Harmonious Blacksmith;*
Inside the music is a window;]

I would play from the *Fireside Book of Folk Songs,* or from operas, or Handel's "Where Ere You Walk." David would turn his head up in the air, like a bird drinking water, and sing lustily. Friends joined in.

And David was reading in the library—everything he could lay his hands on—and building a fine book collection.

[Pencil, Pencil, speak it again,
How the woman is playing, *The Harmonious Blacksmith.*]
"The Simple Scale"

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT
TO HORACE GREGORY (Poet and Editor)

Sunday, May 23, 1937

Dear Mr. Gregory: It's disconcerting to reflect this morning, that I still don't know what you have decided, although I believe it is between *The Christmas Tree and the Terror* and a portion from the *Tahiti.* Won't you let me hear about it, since I'm sending in my mss. this week.

It was a real pleasure to meet Marya Zaturenska and you. I'm afraid we stayed far too long and that my role in the part of the evening betwen the 2nd and third cocktail was an ambiguous one. But perhaps at least a shadow of what I meant was clear. It is clear, I hope, that we enjoyed our visit.

We wish to thank you for "arranging" with the Taxi Man. Who was a very thoughtful taxi man and kept us from all draughts. Did I tell you that when we went out to supper—we simply couldn't find the place you had mentioned? The waiter even, asked us how we came there. Somebody sent us there, my wife said. Does he work on the *tracks?* the waiter asked. We said, Yes! A policeman came in and pulled a fork and knife out of his pocket. (Usually one takes away a fork and knife). So I'm sure it was the wrong place.

We hope we may see you both again, soon.

Sincerely
David Schubert

April 28, 1937: German Planes Participate in Bombing of Guernica

Through Willard Maas, a neighbor, we met Jay Latimer of the Alcestis Press. Latimer was about to publish Elizabeth Bishop, W.C. Williams, and Wallace Stevens, we were told. Latimer lived in a huge room which overlooked the Bay in Brooklyn Heights. It was quite empty. It gave us a forlorn feeling, that Jay was perhaps in dire straits. One night he gave a party for all of his poets. No one came. Latimer was to publish David's book, but the more we knew him the less we believed it would come to anything. I never told David what I felt, nor did he tell me.

1937: Memorial Day Massacre—Union demonstrators outside Republic Steel plant in South Chicago were fired upon by police; 4 killed, 84 injured.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO MARYA ZATURENSKA GREGORY

Summer, Rochester, 1937

Dear Mrs. Gregory—It was good of you to bother sending me that letter. I thought of writing to you about my difficulties with Alcestis a couple of weeks ago, but felt that your sympathies must leave you open to too many letters of my kind, and partially for that reason refrained. I wrote to Latimer about two weeks ago and asked if he would agree to breaking the contract (but have received no answer as yet—that is the way he does things), even while I had some idea of the impossibility of getting into a regular publishing house. I have had as little to do with Latimer personally as possible, and up to this summer I thought our business relationship would be a good one. I have heard the rottenest tales about him and his dealings—but they have come from a couple of people who have done all the talking behind his back, who carry on with him when they can and who seem as untrustworthy as he. Latimer is

as complex as any near-eastern diplomacy. I think the actual reason he began to postpone my book was from lack of money. I believe that much of the difficulties he's gotten into with his authors is caused by his effort to keep up a big front on absolutely nothing. Of course, it's not all so simple as this, and I do not actually know the whole story about even one of the many difficulties other people have had with him. All these bits of gossip came to me only after I had signed a contract. At any rate, it wasn't the postponement, at least not that alone, but a series of lies that came out one after one—from the person on whom they depended. I felt that he might do with my ms. what he had done with at least one other, or put my book out in the hasty sloppy fashion in which one book is coming out. I have tried to find out exactly what his intentions were—but this is an impossible thing to find out from Latimer. So I'm in this unhappy state of having a contract and not having one, while L. is hiding underground somewhere. It has upset me so all summer that it has interfered with my own work. I wonder if Alcestis can go on living very long. He seems to have conducted his business in such a foolish unbusinesslike manner. Stevens and Williams seem to be the only people who have not separated from him; and even this I do not know for a fact.

Had I had your letter a few weeks ago I might not have been quite so hasty. At the same time the whole Alcestis Press atmosphere once one gets any of the inside of it is a very unhealthy mess, and I wanted to be rid of it. Your letter leaves less hope all around.

I agree with you about the League. I was asked by the Poetry Session Committee to write it up for *Poetry;* it was a most unhappy task which I tried to get out of. I did it as briefly as possible—I don't know yet whether it will appear. So much talk, such a large cooperative mouth, and so small a brain! I agree too about spiritual flabbiness. I wish I could think that the work of a Millay or her critics is responsible for the hopelessness and silence (with the exception of one or two or three people), almost a con-

spiracy exists. It does look, though, as if it couldn't be much worse, though I suppose it can, even so.

Again, thanks for writing me.

Sincerely,
David Schubert

DAVID SCHUBERT *Poetry*, 1937

"Today in America there are signs of a literary revival that may resemble or surpass that of the period from 1912 to 1916 .... Those of us who remember the hopeful activity of those years can also remember how it was cut short by the War. And we can see that the promise of the 1930's is threatened in a still more definite fashion." In this way the Call to the National Congress of American Writers opened, and it was in the shadow of the Spanish War that the Congress met, to present a united front against fascism. It was neither Archibald MacLeish nor Ernest Hemingway, but rather Earl Browder, who at least implied that *writing* might be the action of the writer. The reels from Joris Ivens' film, more than any of the speeches, realized the terror of the mass murders, and the heroism and sacrifice of the Loyalists.

At the Poetry Craft Session Horace Gregory, the chairman, spoke briefly on the new consciousness of humanity that is being voiced in the work of certain European writers, on the similarity and influence of Kafka's imagery in the poetry of W.H. Auden, and on the necessity for a departure from the limited imagination of naturalism. The discussion that followed was of great bitterness, but unlike other sessions, here the writer was at least audible. Several attacked or defended the "unintelligibility" in Auden's poetry with arguments often either irrelevant or simple. There appeared in general a cleavage between those who would discard all experience and technique not related to the immediate life of the factory worker, and those who would extend existing techniques into order, in the midst of disorder and confusion. Certain fashionable clichés were uttered: the lyric is dead,

the need for new objective forms to contain the progression from the ego to the mass; but there was also much skepticism. In spite of a consideration of the poet's reading and writing, and the desire for clarity and formal structure, there was little recognition that successful paraphrastic writing would itself be a token of a mastery of experience, as great as that gained from the discipline of action. The concern with what the poet should read seemed essentially a search for ancestors, who are certainly more the possession of the Right, with its worship of blood, and who are most living when least mentioned. Unfortunately there were too many beginnings to explore any idea, but the different elements were reconciled in a committee to provide for an anthology, a literary magazine, and to attempt to enlarge the space given to verse in the magazines.

A poetry reading over WOR was sponsored by the Congress. Present at this broadcast were Horace Gregory, Genevieve Taggard, Louis Zukofsky, and Robert Fitzgerald, all delegates. Among those at the Poetry Craft Session were Sterling Brown, Louis Grudin, Sol Funaroff, Alfred Hayes, Ruth Lechtliner, Walter Lowenfels, Willard Maas, Carl Rakosi, Eli Siegel, Genevieve Taggard, Jean Starr Untermeyer and David Wolff. Rolfe Humphries presided.

Although the Congress was not entirely a *National* Congress, it was nevertheless a tribute to the unanimity with which American writers, those present as well as many conspicuously absent, have rejected fascism. There were few signs of a literary revival.

David Schubert.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT
TO MARYA ZATURENSKA GREGORY

Saturday, June, 1937

Dear Marya Zaturenska Gregory—No, he is not a sacred Cow, but, on the other hand, I'm not a gadfly all day long and in all places fastening upon the sacred Cow. (What a

swell description of somebody the sacred Cow is). It isn't a question of not wanting people to hate me—(although Amity Street *has* its points;) but a voice—I'm like Socrates only in *this* respect—keeps me from doing, never makes me do. You may be right about overturning heaven—and yet I feel the heaven young men overturn has nothing over it (often, at least) or under it, except their own vanity. Certainly, as you say, as they grow older they grow terribly colder. Perhaps I'll reverse.

It would be useless to try to say *why* I'm this way: I certainly am ignorant and uncertain. But I believe that humility will enter the gates, with the proud. It's hard to write a defense of myself, and I'm not very good at it.

I feel myself, that contemporaneity, like Freud, is in the air whether we want it or not; but only on older models can one develop an individuality that has much value. I may not apply my belief but that explains my lack of excitement (in public) over what seems to me the very mediocre standards of magazine editors.

I have suffered very much from saying too many things that were not exact, and still do, not to limit my assertions, even beyond the limits of other people's patience.

But I want to get away from myself to tell you how good your letter made me feel. It was a real rare happy red letter day seeing you and Mr. Gregory. I wouldn't have brought Judith in from the end of the road if I hadn't known then, it was. Though I imagine it must have been something of a shock to see two, when you came in. I saw you were tired and I'm afraid we stayed far too long. Certainly getting away so late was my fault—for I refused to budge. And Judith didn't urge me.

Although I've been told my poems were set up and in type I received back from New Masses today, not the proofs—but the poems—with the clipping about Mr. Gregory, and a note. (I'm glad about the New Era but not so glad about my poems.)

I was relieved to hear that Mr. Gregory wants my Christmas Tree poem for the anthology *New Letters*. But can't he make it no. 1? I shall knock on wood etc. for I've given in my mss. and that poem is included, with the others. I feel it's terribly important and I hope he'll be able to use it. For I'm working on something that's miles, perhaps years from my intention. Three cheers for the violets! late now though it is.

We would like immensely to see you. How about a week Saty. on the 11th or 12th of June? We know suppers are difficult—so we could arrive afterward—or in the middle of a cup of coffee.

Judith says you have wonderful children. I say so too. May I recommend to Joanne "The Earth before History" by Ferrier. After Melville there is so little!!!!

David Schubert

JULIUS BLOOM 1980

I returned to the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences as acting director in 1937 and there was quite a load of work to do, and David was looking for a job.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM

1937

Dear Jules—This is to remind you that I am very seriously looking for a job, and I should be very glad if anything turns up at the Institute. You said you thought there might. I should be willing to do anything, and I feel that I could very competently fit in on their publicity or publication projects. Is there any opening?

When are we going to see you? Give your wife our best regards,

Sincerely,
David Schubert

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO MARYA ZATURENSKA GREGORY

Sunday evening

Dear Mrs. Marya Zaturenska Gregory: (is that all right to call you?)

The more I think it over, the worse I feel about my role in our discussion, because

1) the talk was *not* personal

2) what you say about Macl/influence on current periodical lit, I do not know, and you do

3) the source of the axe, helve and blade, are evident

4) "beware the Greeks bringing gifts."

It was because I thought the emphasis was on the flaccid chameleon character of Macl/thought I objected. I do not admire such thought. I tried to shift the ground of the discussion, although there was as I think about it, essential agreement.

I hope you change your mind about Kreymborg: about *me* in that role. I dislike costume plays of any kind, and my own skin is more dear to me.

I hope the violets are peaceful and have no memory of that charlatan phrase "the fascist unconscious," a piece of criticism on the same level as Macl/war-peace-muse controversy.

Sincerely,
David Schubert

P.S. (I feel better now.)

JULIUS BLOOM 1980

Sometime after the summer of 1937, I created a job for him at the Academy of Music (the employer being the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.) We had a fortnightly magazine, for members. It was agreed right from the start that this was a temporary thing, but we'd let it last as long as it lasted, since I was not the prime mover at the Academy.

1937: Spanish Conflict Warns of Perils in More Widespread Conflict

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

So we would attend the Academy's lectures (I vividly recall hearing Thomas Mann), concerts, and our first modern dance recitals—Hanya Holm and Doris Humphrey, among others.

Several people tried to get David to join the Communist Party, or the Writers Congress, or both. We did attend some of the huge meetings and social affairs, and some evenings of film showings, given by a radical group, but David seemed to view all of it with a distant eye.

[War and hand grenades are
Listening at the corners,]
"Lighthouse Mission"

The fierce movement added to his feelings of isolation, for in the 30's and early 40's there were few writers who did not band together in the interest of the radical movement. Most of the people we knew, in fact, were on the WPA and the few who were not were either Stalinists or Trotskyites. With my twenty-five dollar weekly salary, plus what I earned in the summers, and with David's $25 from the Academy, we were rich in comparison.

July 1937: Japanese Take Two Towns in Fighting near Peiping Chinese Prepare for War

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT
TO MARYA ZATURENSKA GREGORY

July 17, 1937

Dear Mrs. Marya Gregory—Thanks for your letter. I'm

awfully glad "Xmas Tree" is going to be included in no. 1. I hope that both Mr. Gregory and you will have a very good summer of work—not all dishes either. I've made some changes in my book, after all; but I shouldn't say "after all" however, for I've been making them all along. I should like very much to see you and Mr. Gregory; but you are both very busy and I don't know when it would be best to come. I wonder how *your* book is coming along. I am looking forward eagerly to seeing it.

David Schubert

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO THE GREGORYS

August 17, 1937

Dear Gregorys: Thanks for returning the verses. I shelved them for the never never land, and now as I look at the copies again, upon returning them, I realize how right you were about them.

It has been a very long summer, here, and without much fruition. I am having my troubles with the Alcestis Press—or should I say Mr. Latimer. It seems dubious whether I wouldn't be better gone,—and clear of the whole mess. But then you hardly know what I'm writing about, and I myself will not be able to speak clearly about the whole matter until the next week or two. I should certainly not be sorry, however, to be able to be free of Alcestis, and everyone connected with it.

May we visit you early in September? I shall drop you a card when and you can say definitely at that time.

Sincerely

David Schubert

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

September 18, 1937

Dear Belitt—I was terribly glad to hear that you'd got the job at Bennington. I certainly wish you luck at your "diminishing." Who are you going to take for your plus and minus signs? Last night a Bennington girl came to the house, and it sounds like a perfect place in which to work.

In fact its perfection seems the only drawback .... I am having a little difficulty in getting a "place" in the world. I've decided to try for anything and everything. In fact the job you're leaving!! Although I suppose I don't stand a ghost of a chance.

I went out to see the Gregorys the other night. I really find Gregory to be a very brilliant person without any of the personal grievances that so many people—I myself for example, and others I intimately know—have. His devotion to poetry and poets, whether one agrees with specific writing or not, itself is a small cause for a poetic renewal.

I should like to drop up to see you before you go—but I imagine you must be very busy—or we might take that walk to the battery and to lunch that we have almost arrived at several times before.

I was extremely sorry that that Alcestis business had to occur, but I felt that it was best to break with them, although, of course, this was hardly the time I should have preferred. Sooner or later there would have had to be a ruption.

Again, good luck. Do let me hear from you before you leave. (Have you been able to do much work of your own?) .... My own long poems have a way of diminishing to a footnote, speaking of "Diminishing."

Sincerely,
David Schubert.

JULIUS BLOOM 1980

The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences was basically an adult education center. When David worked there we saw each other regularly. We'd go and have a bite at Bickford's and sit hours and talk about what we were reading.

I felt that David was the true poet: he had the poet's vision, and even the slightly oracular touch, a streak of mysticism, too. I seem to recall mentioning it once to him and he laughed it off saying that he just worked with words; the poet was someone who was so drunk with

words that he played with them till they began to talk back. But this is dangerous—I'm reconstructing a conversation that took place many many years ago. But that's why I called him Scrib, the scribbler.

I knew that David had problems. I didn't know intimately what the problems were, some of them had to do with his health, and some with the fact that he was an interior, introverted person who probably could not adjust easily to many so-called normal circumstances in this world. I never discussed any of those aspects of life with him, that I can recall.

THE NATION September 1937

Challenge to American Labor

Nazi activities in the U.S. are beginning to follow the historic pattern laid down in other countries. Affirming a Communist menace, Herr Kuhn, the American Fuhrer, recently put it, "Our organization is just waiting until the Communists get ready to seize control, which will be sooner than you think. Then, if the government—the legal, elected government—needs our help, we will step in and fight for our country, the United States."

October 1937: *Poetry* 25th Anniversary Issue—Morton Dauwen Zabel, Editor

November: *Poetry*, Announcement—

Having brought *Poetry* through its most tragic and critical years, Zabel is retiring to the Advisory Committee in order to carry on more fully his creative and academic work .... George Dillon, who has headed our Advisory Committee for some years, becomes Editor.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

October, 1937

Dear Mr. Zabel: Helen Neville was over here tonight. She is here right now. My wife and I and Helen Neville said that we think it is a shame that you have left *Poetry;* today, we think it is an even greater shame that you have left the Advisory Committee. Not knowing you personally, neither of us 3, but having all admired your criticism and your editorship, and although we have waited before saying something because we didn't know what to say, we nevertheless don't see why we should wait any longer.

I heard that you had been ill, two months ago. I hope that you are well, and will be able to continue your work in other ways.

Sincerely,
David Schubert
Helen Neville
Judith Schubert

P.S. What I meant was that it was a greater shame that you left *Poetry*, and not so great a shame about the Committee.

M.D. ZABEL *Literary Opinion in America*, 1937

Introduction

... Political bias (literary or otherwise) has grown in recent years largely through the necessities of social belief: often—and healthily—as a corrective to the irresponsibility of the impressionist or "liberal" viewpoints, but equally often as a substitute for the more difficult labor of discriminating and stating the literary values without which no amount of other value can make a piece of writing worth the critic's attention. Several distinguished critics have simplified their problems in this way to such an extent that their services to their own cause (in sanctioning or repudiating whatever fits or disagrees with their doctrines, regardless of the existence of esthetic qualities which are fast becoming one of the few trustworthy indexes to desirable qualities in life and human nature itself) must now be

as dubious as their status in the critical field.

["A hand is writing these lines
On your eyes]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

December, 1937

Dear Belitt: This is primarily to wish you a Happy New Year, etc.

You are perhaps wondering what has happened to me: Well, I did get a job after all, for the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, Asst. Editor of Publications: what it means is that I receive press sheets saying that

So and so will appear at -----
On ----------
In ----------
He has bicycled over Bagdad.
Says yes in 92 languages.
Has performed for the Boston Symphony ....

I take all this and dress it up so that it reads,

The versatile and highly popular lecturer, Sir Geoffrey Jones, Bart, Notorious in Europe, infamous in America for his haywire tricks will perform at the Institute in his special hair disappearing act, adults only: no women allowed! Week in and week out, from Shan-Kar and Thomas Mann to Mrs. Easton .... I think it's aces for sheer drudgery ....

The story about Alcestis is a long one; I didn't like the set-up from the beginning, and when a verbal promise was broken I wrote a nasty letter, a nasty silence followed, and another letter asking to be released. I recently heard from them again and they want to put my book out: Latimer, that is, but the whole thing seems best this way, since one can't be sure of the press ....

I saw your poem ["Battery Park: High Noon"] in the *Virginia Quarterly* and both of us read it with delight; it seems to us by far the best thing we've seen in ages; my

only quarrel is that some of it is a little bit touched with a rhetoric reminiscent perhaps of Crane ... but, again, under control always.

What do you think of O'Donnell's stuff! It strikes me as competent but that's about all.

I was very sorry to see Zabel go; and now he has disappeared from *Poetry*'s Advisory Board. What do you make of it? I wonder what the magazine will be like with Dillon on it? Incidentally, Dillon doesn't seem to be adventuring into the open in prose so far, or poetry neither.

I hope you will have a thoroughly good year at Bennington ....

Sincerely,
David Schubert

P.S.

It would be a real pleasure to see you on your way to Bennington, if you are planning to pass a few days in New York.

I seemed to have reached a new low, in my feelings about "A Hope for Poetry."

In spite of the Auden publicity show *New Verse* just staged. But more of that later.

1. Are you going to get a book out?
2. How in the world did Dillon ever become editor?
3. And the Revolution?

These are mad afterthoughts, and you can answer at your own discretion. I'd like to hear from your thoughts: it makes me feel less speechless, less surrounded by friends of the people, enemies of poetry.

[for journeys
You'll never start for.]

NEW VERSE 1937

Homage edition devoted to Auden included such contributors as Isherwood, MacNeice, Spender, Muir, Read, Grigson, etc.

[They're
Transparencies.]

January 1938: Roosevelt proposes a world conference to British to reduce arms, promote economic security. Chamberlain rejects proposal.

[Wear rubbers
And you will be wise."]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

New Year's Day, 1938

Dear Ben, There are so many things I want to say to you, that I have already begun a few times without getting to any of them and my letter has already had a cat's lives. It was very good to hear from you: for I seem to have become progressively more dissatisfied with everything, and, somehow, your letter gave me a feeling of daylight again. I am sending you the Auden-publicity in the same mail: and I wonder how it will strike you. The idea is a good one: there is by far too little interest in poetry, but the object is disproportionate to the verbiage and, at times, ridiculous. Or don't you think so? It is an amazing thing to me, the unity of opinion: and in the face of it, I still say that they are wrong, wrong that is, for who can take seriously the psychoanalysis or the revolutionism of Auden. Perhaps I should say who can take his champions seriously? for in spite of a love for the outré and the

barricades and a rejection of common experience—experience is of course ambiguous—what I mean is a conviction of the *tragedy* of *present* life, he has his points.

Rereading your own poem ["Battery Park: High Noon"], I think it is still an excellent piece of work; I know the faults of what you call the "pastel" form, but I wonder if your triumph wasn't gained a little too easily. I am certainly no believer in the Immaculate Conception Theory of Verse, and because I believe that Hart Crane has written no single poem that is completely integrated (with the exception of a few early pre-Cranian verses) I think you have, on the whole, used him to your own advantage. There are, however, two kinds of specious energy in section II, I think: one is too obvious alliteration, obvious because you are not committed to the Auden hocus-pocus: II, 1: *Des*ce*n*ding *din*ers and the *B*s and *P*s; 2: mimic ... machinal; 5: line 2. Your last stanza, as well as the 2 previous, seem to me entirely successful. I hope you don't think this is pedantic: my own feeling is, as you say, there is no going around Crane for a poet *except to work for* a translucence of expression that corresponds to a clarity of thought and conviction that is itself the thunder, and needs no fireworks.

BEN BELITT 1937

from **Battery Park: High Noon**

2.

Compute the season out of height and heat:
Cubes in the poised shaft dwindle; tackle moves;
Descending diners paddle into the grooves
And burst from bolts and belts upon the street.

Summer deploys upon the brims of hats;
Turns upon twill; affirms with colored drinks
A mimic solstice poised in flying inks

In Babylons of ribbons and cravats.

Here thoroughfares are blind upon the sea—
Enter the packed paths where the lanes converge
That drop the derelict stragglers by the surge,
Like targets in a shooting gallery;

In middle sleep, below the list of bells
That turns soft answers to a barge's brass,
These take their length in quarantines of grass,
Among the pigeons and the peanut shells.

Their capbrims crush out day. Fulfillments leap,
Sudden as bludgeons, in a vacuum:
They answer to the pricking of a thumb,
And serve him more than slumber, who would sleep.

(A stricter sleep I guess, with double dread,
Who waken now and dream these sleepers dead—
And yet, these are my dream that dream the lie,
And keep their sleep more deathfully than I.)

Bend then to seaward. The element you ask
Rather than sea is, wantoner than time;
You bear it on you, strangely, like a mask,
And dream the sailing in a pantomime:

The element is blood; tired voyager, turn:
The reckoning you take is yet to learn.
Somber, at fullest flood, the continents ride,
And break their beaches in a sleeper's side.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT (Continued)

Your poem seems to me very good for this reason: it is daring in the best sense: Frost once said to me that—a poet—his arms can go out—like this—or in to himself; in either case he will cover a good deal of the world. I am so

tired of surface exploration: the silicosis fugues. Your verse seems to me to start outside, enter in, return, and with an imaginative sweep "The element is blood ... lost between myth and mood" to contain a passion that is much more worthy of writing about than anything I see. If this were all, you would have written a good essay: It isn't. "Sombre, at fullest flood, the continents ride/And break their beaches in a sleepers side." seem to me verse of the first order. Incidentally, I think you are on the right key: formal verse is for the modern ear most effective, as a contrast to and in a looser context ....

I myself am not very confident about publishing; I sent my ms. to Harcourt who is retrenching and is publishing his rare book of verse this season on the author's payment. They wrote back that they'd be very glad to see my next ms. but that this one wouldn't pay for itself, etc. etc. I want Harcourt to put out my book, so I feel rather bad about it. It doesn't, of course, make any difference who the publisher is. I have thought of sending my book to Viking but I have been told that they only consider someone who is in with them, so I think you are very lucky to have got them, as I certainly hope you have.

I have heard two different sketchy stories about Zabel and *Poetry*: I didn't know of any "literary" scandal. What is the story? Zabel seems to me "Integer Vitae." Dillon goes with the wind. I stick by the pro-Zabel story and it was good to hear that I have been sticking by the side of the truth. I can only say that I have a distinctly unfavorable impression of Dillon: I sent some stuff to Zabel before it was known that he had left: I don't know whether he saw it or not and I hoped it would reach him. When I heard it was from Dillon. In a very short space of time he had already changed the stationery. This may seem to you a bit ludicrous but I think there was altogether too much hurry about the whole business, format and all. The Lechlitner review seems simply incredible.

Look at the *Partisan Review*! It will become, I think, the best magazine in America. But it is dishonest! It is

Trotskyite! But hell, what of it?

Please get in touch with me when you come to town, but why don't you write beforehand if you get a chance. I should like to meet Eda Lou Walton. Her reviews seem to me to be in the right direction many times; although some of her enthusiasms strike me strange.

Sincerely
David Schubert

Tate's *Narcissus* ["Narcissus on Narcissus," an appraisal of *Ode to the Confederate Dead* by Allen Tate, appearing in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*] seems to me forced and unreal. His poem has a kind of rugged power, but as for being an important poem, well, I don't think so. Too much theory, out of the poem, too little humanity in it. His prose style, too, is uneven: he alternately talks up and down.

[Where the word
Is shadow of the deed and hard
Upon it like first crocuses]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

January 10, 1938

Dear Ben, I have just got myself a pair of spectacles and although I look somewhat like a horned owl, I'm able to see much better. Why I'm writing so soon is this: I'm afraid that I didn't say what I wanted to about your poem, or that you haven't seen what I meant to say. The more I have thought about what I wrote the worse it has seemed, until I have become rather fixed about the whole matter. As I said at the beginning, it is, to me, one of the few modern poems that does not fall apart, that grows successively, from line to line; with, of course, development, etc. Your question, what did I think of the Crane business, I am not sure I made clear. I too prefer mastery to nibbling—which is certainly just the opposite in modern verse today—and I have, with the exception of a few lines, thought you have

done that. Even those lines are no central blemish for, certainly, perfect poems are not written on earth. The whole question it seemed to me, was the next step: and that's why I wrote of emerging from even a mastery of Crane into a simpler air, but of course, there's no advice or admonition—it's largely a matter of preference.

Lambert Davis [editor, *Virginia Quarterly*], incidentally, had asked what I thought of your poem and the issue. (I guess he's cross-questioning everybody.) I'm afraid I was rather severe on Tate and especially O'Donnell but I was glad to write that I thought your poem, that that was something different! and it was indeed excellent.

Why I'm writing this is because of what he wrote back, and because I think that all poets can stand a little praise from Enemies, for surely Tate is no friend of yours, or is he? and Davis has written to me that Tate thought "Belitt's poem was one of the best we had ever published," I was glad too, that Davis agreed with me, re, Tate, Holmes, etc. But no word of a review. (I asked him about it in my letter.)

Have you seen *Poetry*? I feel absolutely wretched about the matter. The poem ['Peter and Mother"] was sent to Zabel when he was still there; I told you my impression. In the notes I see that Dillon reprinted a portion of a letter I very foolishly wrote over two years ago: I was aghast when I saw it. I hate personal revelations: I have been perfectly miserable about it. ["very many different things in places certain and uncertain"—*Poetry]*

[This paper representation imperfectly made,
Be like words at a railway station]

Harriet Monroe sent me their publicity card: and against my better thought wrote that, requesting them, however, not to publish this letter; sending them a note I shouldn't have since I like *Poetry* to stand on its own legs! I felt that there was nothing to say. I can't understand Dillon's using it. I think it's a betrayal of any editorial

confidence. It probably seems stupid the whole business, but I've been rather sick over it.

Let me hear from you when you get a chance, and particularly what happened with Zabel. I think it is a terrible thing that *Poetry* is under Dillon, whether he likes my work or not.

And let me hear from you anyway.

Sincerely,
David Schubert

[Still
Speaking though the train has gone—]
"Peter and Mother"

1938: Mussolini Acclaims Fascist Goose Step

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

January 11, 1938

Dear Mr. Zabel, I felt very deeply about your letter. Also, may I say that your opinion of my work, whatever it may be, matters more to me than that of any one I know, or know of.

I hope that you will be well and have much time now to devote to your own writing.

There are many people who regret your leaving *Poetry* as much as I do.

Sincerely,
David Schubert

HARRY LEVIN *The Nation*, February 1938

Innovation and Collective Talent

The writer can afford to take nothing for granted; he must find out for himself. He must not kid himself into the notion that attending congresses and accepting

slogans will bring him any nearer to reality.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

February 20, 1938

Dear Ben, I thought I'd write you just a note so that at least the Mailman would not pass by entirely, utterly empty handed the way it's been with me lately. By the way, I've been going through some spring house-cleaning, although that is anticipating somewhat, and I found some quotations from Yeats that you undoubtedly know:

"At certain moments, always unforeseen, I become happy, most commonly when at hazard I have opened some books of verse. Sometimes it is my own verse when, instead of discovering technical flaws, I read with all the excitement of the first writing." *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918)

"Deliberately reshaped ... style" (*Reveries* 1916) whose ambition to "write out our thoughts in as nearly as possible the language we thought them in, as though in a letter to an intimate friend," although "so many years before one can believe enough in what one feels even to know what the feeling is."

(Rereading this last hodgepodge of quotations, I wonder where the *feeling* comes in after all the *thinking*? Passionate thought?)

"Style, personality—deliberately adapted and therefore a mask—is the only escape from the hot-faced bargainers and the money changers."

"Never had I more
Excited, passionate, fantastical
Imagination, nor an ear and eye
That more expected the impossible"
(*The Tower*)

"I was good-looking once like that young man, but my unpractised verse was full of infirmity, my Muse old as it were; and now I am old and rheumatic, and nothing to look at, but my Muse is young. I am even persuaded that she is like those Angels in Swedenborg's vision, and moves

perpetually 'towards the day-spring of her youth.' " (*Dramatis Personae*)

But looking at the verse itself, well, I'm going to buy my edition of Yeats tomorrow, for he does belong to the ages although he knows it too well ....

I haven't heard anything yet from Holyoke; I think I will write a letter in a few weeks offering myself, since I imagine there will be no invitation. I hope you don't get any colds this winter and that you write a lot of what you want to.

I called up E.L. Walton: no, my book has not yet been read, trust I'm to see her Sunday. I hope it's not read by Sunday or I'm likely to be very miserable. What luck with Viking?

David Schubert

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Eda Lou Walton, whom we met through Belitt, was now better known as a poetry critic for the *Herald Tribune* than for her poetry; she was also a professor at N.Y.U. At her Waverly Place apartment we met Henry Roth, her former student (*Call it Sleep* was dedicated to her), and also the fine poet Leonie Adams, and her husband, the brilliant critic, William Troy, both of whom went to teach at Bennington.

March 1938: Germany Annexes Austria

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

April 21, 1938

Dear Ben, Each night I have said to myself I will read Lip's *The Savage Hits Back* and write to you: not that they are related, but I wanted to do both. Since it now appears that I shall never read that book—at least not till my vacation—I have decided that there is still one thing I can do. I admire all men of vitality—prize-fighters, professional

revolutionists, industrialists and Union Organizers. But as for me—when I get home I am so tired that only by the greatest exercise of the will can I keep myself from sleeping less than two hours immediately. What I'm doing at the Office is merely measuring cuts: the great, the near great, and those near the great all pass through my hands at this time of the year when nobody should have to work or measure anything.

In addition, I've let myself in for an eternity of days that will be spent typing out cuts. I am only waiting for my vacation—and I keep making all kinds of notes that I hope will grow—with that fabulous watering.

I was very sorry to hear that Viking had discovered that even one book of poetry a year is too much of an investment unless the American Public can understand every word in it. But I didn't know what to say, except my sympathy—and why not try Harcourt? I have heard that MacLeish is editor now. Naturally I didn't hear from Viking—and I think that your defense of poesy was swell. They will probably ask you for your next book and you can write a "go, little publisher." If you won't, I have several that I have all ready for myself.

Did you ever get a chance to mention me to Mrs. Ames [At Yaddo]? Summer falls between June and July .... When are you coming to town and to supper here—Or is your vacation going to be in Vermont?

I have been writing on a few poems and I wonder if you'll like "The Wheel" which I'm enclosing.

Judy sends her best regards and says that she bets you are not so tired out from teaching now and that the girls are even more "inquisitive."

Do write me, if only to say, Hello.

David

The Wheel

I

It is and is not
The butcher
Jack Falstaff
Who ogles the plaster cow
At whose counter
America
For sale.

II

It is and is not
The psychology of a kiss.
Her arms white, white,
Speak, lowly, whitest,
Maiden, in sheer
Gown, the years keep, pinning
A corsage of
Violets on your
Breast.

III

Even the willows
Wrinkle their heads,
Trying to think,
Perplexed, *Precisely*.
Who are looking
At so many years ago, trying
To see amid blurred bowls
Of light your very wise
Eyes, bluer than any
Sky.

IV

It is and is not
The band played *High and low*
Low and high. Delicately

Lie on the first grass of
April. Surely the earth is
Strong enough. There
Was not much to say: there
Was so much to say. And
Surely the earth is young
Enough. But
What do I mean?
Why, what? except
There is a light
Under the door and
Under the night
If you will
Say so.

V

They said, "Please come here. This is the great
Sleep. This is the mighty man you were looking
for; incidentally, he looks remarkably like you."

But he said, "We are too young," and threw the sheet
aside in the narrow night, listening to the bullfrogs
and the clear notes of the Carolina chickadee,
Eeney meeney miney mo.

So they said, "Please listen, Mr. Imagination. You
think you are smart, eh? but yesterday is no less
double faced. It is the great Sleep you're struggling
toward."

But he said, "I don't believe you and I won't. I was
the single person who tried to reform the particles,
whether curled in a bum's pocket or dangling from
Leonora's locket; as a matter of fact I resisted."

They said, "You have nothing to fear. O no! Sleep,
my brave soldier: a man has turned the stone into
his argument. It is the great .... "

But he wouldn't listen.

VI

Little tragedy,
Illuminate the night,
Profound,
Irrational,
Long;
So
Wrong!

VII

Rust ravels, reaves
Unright, upright, distraught,
The man, the woman,
Caught
To listen even
In auto to the peculiar
Quite different and yet
Similar room, where
A heart distended fills
The man at the wheel.

VIII

No fingers can quite probe
That pulse, but are
Of that gigantic dark
Subtle, locked, unlocked.

IX

Little tragedy,
The twenty-six letters cannot fill
The littlest heart,
The paper boat is
Docked?
The earth is not
Strong
Enough? The dandelion's

White hot, love
Me, love me not is
Not wing
Enough?

X

Little tragedy,
Illuminate the night,
Irrational long,
So
Wrong!
Illuminate
The night.

XI

Raise it loud, this song, my song;
If you liked my work before, please like this.
If you disliked it, like it anyway.
Now the factory man rushes home from work.
Now the chimney soars into another night.
All the children have taken off their roller skates,
And their fathers' hurrying feet hide in shame.

XII

And the bootblack, misery, joy on his back
Walks to his attic room behind the Bank on
    Willoughby Street.

XIII

Lo, these words say, "Here we are, hand in hand in hand.
Take us. Read us. We sincerely wish you well.

XIV

Understand."

David smoked an endless chain of cigarettes, down to the stub—sometimes rolling his own—so that the ends of his thumb and forefinger were stained a deep brown; and he always kept a cup of black coffee at hand. His desk was littered with scraps of paper and empty match pads, on which he was forever scribbling notes; sometimes I recognized something I had said, or an observation I'd made.

May 1938: House establishes committee to investigate un-American activities of Nazi, Fascist and Communist Organizations

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

April 28, 1938

Dear Ben, I was delighted to get your letter yesterday and to read all the good news. You can be sure that Knopf will put out a handsome book, and, anyway, it is especially exciting to hear of Knopf putting it out. Then your teaching has come along so smoothly, that, for my part, I shouldn't be surprised to hear that you were apppointed Dean, after next year. You certainly should find time, with all this happening, to do some writing; but I think that will take care of itself.

You needn't be apprehensive about your reviewers of the extreme Left; I always am glad to make enemies, I only want enemies of an equal, no, a greater punch—and that's the best one can hope for. Besides, there will be many more books, each, not necessarily a reprisal but rather a continuation of the war. What I'm thinking about is that line in Louise Bogan's poem, "With so much hate behind us ... " and all who are unsentimentally and hard eyed facing the shore are on the side of the angels.

With so much good news to make me feel good, I have borrowed a little of your own spirits, and I have been

going about with more of a belief in the fact that there must be somebody who reads poetry and cares about it (who isn't a poet). No, my own ms. has been making the rounds, at least spasmodically, and the answer has been that it won't sell to pay the publishing copies. So that I have almost given up and am merely writing .... You have certainly gotten the hub of "The Wheel," perhaps I should say that it will be an end-piece, coming after other Violences. I'm looking for a writing tender and hard and total. My satisfaction is not so very much.

About Yaddo, I have thought about it a good deal. I should like to go, but on Mondays I say that there is too much machinery to set going, although on Tuesdays I am all for that intricate business of reference and aside. Monday has won out: and so, although I should have gone had I received an invitation, since I haven't (this is very involved) I think it's better this way, and perhaps some other time Mrs. Ames will ask me, instead of the other way round. Actually, all that necessary series of favors, and they might not all be given so generously, depresses me; but even if they were, it is probably premature.

I was very glad to hear that Morton Zabel will be at Bennington. I have often thought about him and looked to see him sometime. I wish I could be there.

This business of measuring cuts is part and parcel of an inventory, begun three years before my residence when the former Director, Atkins, told the editor to scrap the cuts. The porter asked if he couldn't see them. Instead Mr. Atkins invited a junk man—was offered three dollars for about three thousand—and decided to keep them all. The cuts that I'm working on go back to the war years ....

Again, my sincere pleasure at your news, and I shall look forward to seeing "The Five-Fold Mesh" with impatience. Why the delay until June? Is that always customary? It seems silly to me. I should like to have my book attacked immediately (by the printers) and out in a month—but then I know that only happens in daydreams.

David

P.S. Crane, Yeats and Dickinson. It is tantalising. Is this a course in three aspects of a modern preoccupation, with, I mean, more or less private mysticism, outside the tradition at any rate, or are they the highlights in a course that stretches from the first back? P.S.

We invite you to a
"Private Hearing of our New
Phonograph!" It is a turntable
but it sings with the voice of angels!

My own vacation comes between June and July so that we will be in the City then.

June 1938: Temporary National Economic Committee to Recommend Curbs on Monopolies and the Growing Concentration of Economic Power

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

June 24, 1938

Dear Ben, For the last week I have had a letter to you on my desk, asking if you would care to use our apartment for the month of July. You see, we were not going to be in the City—a few miles out of it—and it seemed a shame that it would be empty all that time. Our plans have gone a little askew, but what we have at last decided is this: we'll be out in probably Conway, Mass., from June 29-July 24 or 25. If you can use our apartment for that time, you are most welcome to it. And of course, we can clean up the little roof room if you would care to stay longer.

I meant to tell you that I was unable to say more than a how d'ye do the other day, when you had telephoned. The Boss came in at that very moment with something which had not so much to be asked as to be answered.

We had been vagabonding over the country for the last two weeks, looking for a place.

[All evening the smell of phlox, your head
On my shoulder as the countryside sped
Past the auto.]

(We didn't get what we thought we had.) Or, as the other night, we walked to the River and threw stones into the water and Judy talked with me about children and men and women until it was ten o'clock.

[You are,
Instinctively, the feeling
Of happiness, the visit equal
To desire.]

So that I'm afraid that even if Morton Zabel tried to look me up, we were out. I am sorry not to have seen him.

We saw the Gregorys the other day—they have left for a trip to the West. Marya has been very sick, and it is on her account that they are going. They are both very fond of you, and you ought to look them up when you get the chance. I believe Marya is going to write to you.

It is strange how my imagination runs ahead of any situation. I have kept away from everybody with a kind of nightmare hanging over me these last few months. And it is so much my own .... Has this occurred to you? The spring, and now the summer, seem untenable and unreal to me. I cannot believe it. It is a weird feeling of winter not yet over, and I am wondering if anybody else has it this year. I cannot understand it. Surely, it has come to stay for a while. And my Boss even says, he is getting old, that summer and spring are always alike.

Oh yes, Judy has cut her hair. "Topsy," I call her. But she really looks pretty nice.

[Beloved, we went looking for a house
We could not find. Or did we find it.]

Won't you let me hear if you can use our place as soon

as possible, so that I can make arrangements with our superintendent. I think you know the stairs—and the roof. It is, however, a little hot in the day—but not too much so. We should be very glad to have you use it.

I'm sorry not to be here during the early part of your New York stay, but we shall certainly see each other, I hope, later on in July.

David.

[Kind hearted girl, of flowers the mignonette.]
"Looking for a House"

MOLLY WEINERMAN 1980

I remember the affection. And David's playful, child-like delight, especially when I brought him those Hershey candy bars.

[SAIL
FOR THE BALI ISLES IN A DINNER PAIL]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

The summer after David was graduated and got his job on the *Bulletin*, we took our first and only paying vacation. David answered an advertisement in the *New Republic*. We soon found ourselves on the northern Massachusetts border—a location not far from where Archibald MacLeish had a home—a fact that pleased David. The woman who met us at the train, a white haired spinster, retired from a nearby Ivy League woman's college, drove us to her historical eighteenth century home. The idea filled us with pleasure.

[FREE DIRECTIONS FOR THE LONESOME PINE
TRAIL!]
"When Apples on the Lilac"

July 1938: Lack of Reserves Slows War in Spain

ROLFE HUMPHRIES *The Nation*, 1938

Federico Garcia Lorca was a man in his middle thirties when the fascists killed him at Granada a year ago ... his art, while basically Andalusian, was remarkable for its sensitive assimilation of influences .... He knew how to write both simply and subtly at the same time, and it is on this account that minority and masses are united in his praise.

Just exactly what prompted his criminal and stupid murder is not very clear; nor has any eyewitness ever been found to report the actual details of the execution. Garcia Lorca took no part in politics, belonged to no political party ... and made rather a point of avoiding assemblies where political argument was rife. He seems to have thought of himself as a universal man, certainly not above the struggle but at any rate out of reach of the quarreling. Probably the fascists' instinct was sounder than their reasons: they recognized in him the kind of person they are eager to get rid of.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

July 7, 1938

Dear Ben—We both hope you are well settled now, and that the place is all that you hoped it to be. Right here it's completely silent, except for the song of a red-eyed vireo. I have been translating some poems of Federico Garcia Lorca and really I find myself becoming more and more an admirer of him. One of his poems, "Don Pedro," which I believe has not been translated—or at least printed in the magazines—is a little masterpiece.

I feel a genuine kinship with him, although he's dead in Spain and I am in this very New England Conway .... I think you'll like the poem a lot.

MacLeish lives around here; up a steep road and then into a Federal mansion. So far, we have not met, although

it would be easy to. But I have less desire to meet him than almost anybody else. At the Jones Library I was looking at his book of *Collected Poems*. And he has almost everything except a *backbone* to make his poems get up and walk on their own marrow. Even so, I shall be one of the few people in the United States who likes his "Pot of Earth." It's around the house, and look into it if you get the chance.

Speaking of backbone, when I saw his house on one of my walks—and time has a way of simply vanishing in this country—between a goodly jealousy of such freedom—and a healthy kicking against it—I said to myself like a very materialist that perhaps in this elegant poet's home was the reason for that lack of marrow which sprawls all over MacLeish. But at any rate, I suppose one can't deny him a deciduous and (although reminiscent) nostalgic beauty.

The clock, however, does go round, and I'm getting not as much work done as I would have liked. In Amherst, I met Robert Francis whom I had known years ago. He is a very simple honest person who admires James Still, and is as genuine a pastoral poet as there can well be. He tells me he works every morning. That would be nice, except that I simply cannot think in the morning. We will have to compare notes on this.

About phonograph, radio and refrigerator—I'm sure you're much more expert about them than I am; don't by any means feel tied down to them and, if necessary, just throw them out of the window. Have you crossed under Penny Bridge and walked up to the pierheads? When I get back, I'll have to show you a few places that I'm sure you won't be able to ferret out yourself.

Goodbye for now,

David Schubert

[She is playing, *The Harmonious Blacksmith;*
Inside the music is a window; there she sees,
A raindrop's drop of dwindled rain,
A fly that lifts two legs,]

BEN BELITT 1980

I remember faces and intensities and a Brooklyn rooftop in midsummer ....

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

The reality was not such a pleasure. On the hottest days, with the branches of the great trees scratching the window panes, our room remained dark, damp and cold; and with the night's several prowling cats we were unnerved. Not that we told each other.

> [That rushing tree is red! Breathlessly—
> *John, where are you John?* ...]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

July 11, 1938

Dear Ben, Your letter, the Tom Collins, the pier and the Crow's nest all breathed a good deal of happiness, which I hope will remain, and the work undone which, I hope, won't. We're leaving this place today for Rockport, Mass., because we found out we weren't nearly as happy as we thought we were, and the more we thought about it the worse we felt. Miss Adams, who has the distinction of having had a poem accepted by *Scribners* in 1906, and printed in 1923, is for all her poetic sympathies a little too fine blooded, so that I feel such a great longing for a mouthful of hay say, instead of souffle, for a beer or even a whiskey straight instead of a demi-tasse. Not all the beautiful moon and the brooks make up for the room we're in; it's a big room but I have felt stifled. The tree outside the window covers all the light; it is on the north, and I have felt stifled. Last night I had such a night of terror, grotesque as it is in the daylight, as New York has never given me.

So that we shall leave for Rockport and the sea and a room full of LIGHT almost immediately. So far my search has brought me little, but I expect something huge and exciting from the sea.

Your new poem ["Tarry, Delight"] I read; I read and reread. At first sight it seemed cold and strained, but rereading it, its jeweled and cold quality seemed to grow warmer and warmer, and breathe out. I think, however, that it will be a little less warm even afterwards than it perhaps should be; but I will see. It seems more a poem of device and intellect.

Your Rimbaud translation ["Bateau Ivre"] has a ring and a beat to it like the sea itself. I think it has a notable finish and unity—it's an English that doesn't sprawl off into the no-man's land of French idiom in English dress or English prose in French verse. The last line and the "papery" in particular—I should prefer *paper*—is the only one I don't care too much for— but that is I suppose a matter of taste.

My own poem ["The Small Net"] has grown to such a formidable length that its typing, in the present, has become a little bit of an Atlas-like task. As soon as I'm settled at Rockport, I'll send it on to you, for your very best and worst remarks. I have tried to make it—but then it's better to have it speak for itself.

The medieval books—especially some of the philosophers—are far from dull. I was interested in the thought of so few generations ago, and the mystical way has seemed to me no part of fascism except perhaps in their mutual abandon of reason. I don't see how you can escape from the medieval men, however, with Hopkins and Eliot and even the secular Lawrence and Crane.

I have been reading Brooks' "Flowering of New England." His chapter of New England's Lowell with his Indian-giver style, judging the great dead "like refractory children," ending up with a penchant for royalists and churchmen, made both of us laugh, for Brooks had in mind those modern champions of mock-humility, wherein again, the pride has turned to pathos.

Our address for the time being will be Rockport, Mass.,General Delivery.

Goodbye for now,
David

[Their faces are like hollyhocks
Across a fence of rain they mock
The puddle, and the chewing gum wrapper!]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

July 15, 1938

Dear Ben, The poem that I'm at last typing, climaxes my work so far. I hope you'll like it. Davis didn't understand, although "there are passages in it that move me tremendously without my quite knowing why," and although he thought "it is indubitably good." Not that he is a testament or a witness, but the way things are there's no place for me to send it, so that I will have to wait that future book before it's printed, I guess.

How are you in the Crow's Nest, which Judy thinks is perfect for its name. Busy, I hope. We're settled at *Tyron, Box 99, Rockport, Mass.* Rockport is full of artists, but the water is very blue, the room very big,and I'm biding time, till this vacation is over and I can get some work done.

Goodbye for now,
David

[Pencil, pencil, speak it again,
How the woman is playing *The Harmonious Blacksmith.*]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

July 21, 1938

Dear Ben, Yes, this place is heaven after Conway, and there are no hermit thrushes around, but there is much very real life. Between Jonathan—aetat 5—and Jeremy—aetat 7—there is no room for the 1776 Blues. You should come out here, when you get the chance, merely to see the quarries, the old houses that are inhabited not alone by ghosts. The artists all hide together; the lesser

ones on Bearskin Neck, the greater ones in houses all over, so that there is very little to be seen of them, except in store windows. What I can't understand is why so many painters must paint the *quaint*, and why there must be so many romantic brushmen of the dory and the fisherman's shack. The Board of Trade calls it "Motif No. 1."

I was very much interested in what you wrote of "The Small Net," and to begin with, I was more than delighted that you thought it, also, or at least agreed with me, that it was an ambitious poem, in scale and partially, any way, in achievement. I have thought over what you have said about pointillism, but I can't but feel that my work is much more simple than that labored technique, which, in poetry, I associate with the organized dissociation of certain American *Left* poets. I'm willing to admit that it's a matter, somewhat, of gaining effects by piling up images, but in no *pure* sense, that is, of using only color, of images with reference to their pattern. I myself think at least a tougher technique, and I wonder if that effect of stippling is not perhaps the result of an ellipsis; that will disappear like a road that ends in a curve, to reappear further on. So that, "The Small Net," I certainly think, may err on the side of a labored repetition of certain symbols, (although I don't think so) but they serve to unify the series of portraits. And I like the flatness, and the neurotic nervousness of the refrain at the end. For it makes me feel like having somebody say, Now A.T. and T. has just gone up 5 points, Mr. Schubert, when I'm thinking of the moon. (I tried, I should say, disappear—dis-appear, but I liked the gravity of dis appear; but, as wasn't it Uncle Toby said, "de hobby-horses non est disputandum?"

I am grateful that you have thought about the poem, and I should say that you certainly "got" the whole of it; perhaps only a seer would know that the portions are fragments of personalities, "little little minutes" in neurotic lives and war, "minutititos." And what you say about the difficulties of keeping something from breaking apart with such a method seems to be important and worth

remembering. I'd like to think, however, that I am breaking away from as well as developing what you call the "stippled."

I received from Morse a copy of *XXth Century Verse;* it is more interesting than *Poetry* is today, but lacks even *Poetry*'s level of mediocre competence. It's a magazine that ought to go ahead, I think. Morse has taken a couple of things of mine, and I'd like very much to send him your translation of "The Drunken Boat" (the anthology will probably not be out until August, September or even later.) I hope to see him before I leave, and if I see him, shall show it to him then. But I'm not sure just what the payment would be, although I think it's something, or if you won't mind my showing it, although I hope not. More about it, when I get in town.

I certainly should tell you that at last I heard from Best [an editor at Viking Press]. You know, I wrote a rather sharp note, after a month's silence. Well, he says, that I misinterpreted. That to be sure, before a book of poems is published the scales of trade must be carefully measured, but that they were considering. Before a book is accepted there must be "exceptional and unanimous enthusiasm" in the ofice. I don't see how anybody could ever get the unanimous enthusiasm of the New York Vikings unless they are inland shepherds. Certainly I didn't get it. So I have affixed a date on my ms., made some more changes, and I shall send it on the rounds again; in my own private thought putting it on a "reserve list."

It was good to hear that I stand a chance of going to Yaddo next year, for this vacation has convinced me that Yaddo must be as near an ideal workshop as there is inside a vastly larger income than we have. And I shall make a real effort to get there.

I'm looking forward to seeing your review. Has it come out yet? And when will it, if it hasn't? But I don't suppose there's any point asking questions in this letter, for I'm planning to be back in New York Sunday morning,

and I can ask them of you instead of by paper. You're welcome to stay in the "Crow's Nest" if you want to. But with Eda Lou Walton's immense place ours will probably seem more of a wren's nest .... Best wishes for your "telescoping" and I hope you come back with several undiscovered stars, or even planets.

David

P.S. I'm ashamed to say that I agree with you about the Medieval philosophers—although I'm afraid that a good deal of modern "scientific" philosophy will appear just as worthless, let go some centuries. Perhaps philosophy isn't so far from poetry—take away the preoccupation, the goal or the emotion's importance and it turns flat, but with reason's flatness something uniquely its own.

[She is playing *The Harmonious Blacksmith*]
"The Simple Scale"

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO HORACE GREGORY

1938

Dear Horace, That *is* good news, and I hope it means that Marya is coming too, and also that single-handed stiller of ratraps, the Attic Commando, and Johanna with full field equipment of paints and easel. There will be phlox of lilacs for her in the arboretum.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH *Poetry*, July 1938

In Challenge Not Defense

The time is past for the defenses of poetry. The defenses have all been written. The time now is for the challenges ....

The loudmouthed, disrespectful, horselaughing challenges to those who tell us poetry is "pure." Those who tell us poetry is "poetry." Those who tell us poetry is a parlor game and has no truck with the living of live men or the misery of hungry men or the politics of ambitious men or

the indignation of believing men. Those who tell us the eternal poetry is the poetry written about the feeling of being dreadfully alone. Those with the High Standards. (The impotent have the High Standards: the begetters beget.) Those with the Love of Posterity. (Posterity is the offspring of the childless.) Those who escape into mirrors—into the gentleman-farms and the upstairs rooms with the view of the river and the seminars at five p.m. The loudmouthed disrespectful challenge to all such to come out of their words and their paragraphs into the open air of the art and say their say in the sun with the wind blowing. The loudmouthed disrespectful challenge to look at the actual world and say what poetry is native to the actual world ....

The failure is a failure of desire. It is because we the people do not wish—because we the people do not know what it is that we should wish—because we the people do not know what kind of world we should imagine, that this trouble haunts us.

September 1938: German-Czech Crisis
Chamberlain Appeases Hitler by Allowing Germany to Occupy Switzerland

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

September 8, 1938

Dear Mr. Zabel: For a long time now, I have wanted to write you; what has kept me from doing so is the suspicion of a favor wanted, or of my own doubts. But perhaps I can count on your sympathy with my work. It seems to me that far from any hopes for poetry, the standards are sinking so low that they are invisible. And I think it has been much more of a misfortune, your leaving *Poetry*, than you ever imagined.

I have read and reread the essays in your book many

times; I saw with dismay what stupid and completely unethical charges were brought against it. But I suppose that when a battle is fought nowadays, the only thing worth doing is the liquidating of the enemy, and that means all but those who are doing the liquidating. I was delighted with the attack on the man who is such a pillar of the new poetry, Archibald MacLeish. At one time I thought his "tenderness" was redeeming; but it is an emotion without any thought to direct it. And what it leads to is an indiscriminate and utterly befogging prose, since that's his new kind of poetry. If I may say this, the poetry of Robinson still seems too leisurely and slow, to me, but I can see more and more reason for admiring what is fast becoming the rarest virtue of all, "integrity."

Perhaps living does follow writing, and living is found only at the front of life—in its radios and papers and round-tables, though I doubt it. On the one hand are the prophets and the highly self-conscious myth makers; on the other side is "the man below the man below the man." I almost think that Wallace Stevens is right, and not all those warriors of words.

All this, I'm sure, must sound very strange and strained to you; but I feel as if it cannot be said loud enough, and I have not said it all.

I am, in spite of all this, writing; adding and subtracting poems from my book, although when it will be published I do not know. For those who are most interested would be glad to consider my *second* book!

I hope I will hear from you, when you have the time or desire to write me.

Sincerely,
David Schubert

M.D. ZABEL *Poetry*, 1935

This [a statement by MacLeish] is nobly expressed and it involves an inevitable esthetic loyalty, but MacLeish's practice shows too clearly how for him art, like human stoicism, became an evasion of the specific

responsibility to which the poet, no less than the humblest honest man, is committed. Poetry, like the moral life, is an art of concrete conditions whose style and strength are realized when conceptual or ethical abstraction is tested by vital experience. It is as easy to fail in that test through an exclusive esthetic idealism as through the simplifying aims of propaganda.

KERKER QUINN *Herald Tribune*, September 1938

New-Discovered Star

Here is a book [*Concerning the Young* by Willard Maas] to support the thesis of Archibald MacLeish ... that poetry is a living thing, no longer feebly defending its existence, but challenging to "look at the actual world and say what poetry is native to the actual world."—and being painfully aware that the current crisis must be met, not escaped from.

... Maas is writing courageous poetry, straight from the heart, punctuated with his generation's question marks ... heightened by an ear that knows music and an eye that knows life.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David was showing signs of restlessness and dissatisfaction, even though poems, about which he was always very fretful, were being taken by the top literary magazines. Deciding then to make a change, he matriculated at Columbia for an M.A. in English.

[Feeling like "a very village of sorrow,"
Just like Franz Schubert,]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

September 15, 1938

Dear Ben—I had already written to you when the phone rang two days ago. It was Morton Dauwen Zabel, to say

that he had received a letter that I wrote him in a gloom far greater than that you received. He said that he might see me at lunch—he was only staying two days—but that was impossible. Incidentally, he said that he was recommending me to Yaddo. And he asked if I had heard from you. He said that he had meant to see you before he left or write to you—I could not hear very clearly—but that he had left abruptly and that there was no time. And I said I would tell you that. So that I have not yet met him, who stands for me as a pillar of what I most respect. That *Poetry* can no longer be seriously thought about is obvious. Have you seen the last number. Shades of MacLeish, turning in his Gerontion grave.

I've been going about with the feeling of such failure—though how unimportant it is and how necessary to stand apart. I've thought of writing utter transparency of expression with terrific intensity—but that, I suppose, is a matter of a lifetime. Certainly, I see little more worth doing than writing poetry.—The world about seems insane. Chamberlain a comic opera figure. The Trotskyites right in their reasoning—the Communists in their acts shifting weather-vane. It is an irreconcilable madhouse. So I have intrenched—and in my likings—and I cannot again take my side with believers in millenium, new or old. I'm afraid that all this must seem very chaotic and desperate to you, but I hope you will be able to make out what I mean. In addition, lately, I have been deleting, re-writing and writing in my ms. so that now, I feel positive and definite again.

I'm terribly sorry not to have told you about the Rimbaud poem at once; I was surprised. I had not thought that Rimbaud wrote a poetry as sweet and free from violence as that is. I like it very much. I think I have the bargain over you. For you had seen poor [Samuel] Greenberg's poem before. I had not seen Rimbaud's.

About Crane—what I meant when I said that about "being cheated" was this: I hate to feel that a poetry is so inextricably tied up with the tragedy of the poet that it

cannot lead its own life. About the aura, tones and overtones of meaning in Crane's verse, that certainly remains there, as you have said, one way or the other.

I wrote to Morse about the same time that I sent you the Greenberg poem, recommending you for that critical article, and your poetry. Has he gotten in touch with you? He wrote back saying that he knew, liked and respected your poetry and your criticism. He seems like a very young person, uncertain of himself. But that does not mean that his judgments are worthless. My own feeling about the whole matter is this: it's enough to have one's friends—those whose opinions one respects—pronounce their liking. But in the case of editors and the rest—how can one possibly choose editors who are blameless? who show impeccable taste? All this is by way of saying that I think you should be pleased, if just a little, that Morse does like your work a good deal, and that I hope you won't be annoyed with me for having given him your name and address.

It is this sudden spurt of work that has got me back again. If one could only keep for a lifetime the insights of a moment! But like anguish even, it passes, and is lost. However, you know what it is to be *driven*.

The trouble with so much poetry, I have become absolutely convinced, is its utter lack of character. The pulse is weak. It is a momentary wind. Take Willard's book, which I have just seen. I have given up being charitable and I must say that it's incredibly and utterly naively bad. It is *so* superficial, like himself. Here is the sensitive American moving to every headline. And do you think—I'm talking about last week's *Tribune* —that K.Q. has a single brain in his head. Such disorganization and sentiment! But then, let the brief laurel that he'll get rest on his head; it is unsubstantial enough!

You sound quite differently from me, so happy. Is your new term on yet, and are you liking your new place? Your sofa, has it come? And what records did you buy? And could I come to see you when the leaves are

turning—this sounds very sentimental, I suppose, but I have not been out in the country in an autumn for a dog's age. And it would be good to go out then. Or will you be too busy, say in mid October?

The reason I haven't been translating Lorca is that he is such an *elusive* poet—he vanishes just when I think I've caught him ... And I'm looking for stouter fare now. Last night I was reading to Judy a passage on Mallarmé in Bernard Fay's "Panorama de la littérature contemporaine"—(this is not stout fare, either, of course.) I was tremendously moved by the account of him, such sympathy that I felt, and yet knowing that his aim is so impossible to attain, certainly beyond words. "Une souffrance effrayante mais par laquelle ses oeuvres, aujourd'hui (this was written in 1925, before the Cowley Poetic Counter-Revolution) encore, sont vivifiés." And "le plus noble, peut-être, (of the symbolists) en son orgueil et sa tristesse, le plus douloureux aussi, car il n'eut ni la colere d'un Rimbaud (this is not me but Fay, so do not be too indignant!), ni l'ivresse d'un Verlaine pour se consoler, et sans cesse il mesura la distance entre son ambition et sa réussite." I have transposed these sentences. Was he not, as a person, a true hero of the imagination?

Ben, when is *your* book coming out? Has the date been changed? For I have seen no signs or notices of it. But that may be because I read the papers erratically. And my own clipping work has given me an insane aversion to them. I hope it comes out soon! the book, not the newspapers. Although I conjecture that the date has been set back a little, or even in my cursory way I would have seen it.

Are you doing any writing these days? There is a small chance that the Institute may allot two pages of verse in its new quarterly—a quarterly on art, music and literature. If it amounts to anything, and if I have a free hand with it—it would be fun to print some good poems—if the poets would not be scared off. There will be money paid. And, if the thing goes through—they're trying to get something of Marianne Moore's for the first issue—and if

I can do some strict editing it may turn into something very promising. If it does, perhaps you might care to let me publish that Rimbaud poem or give me a poem of your own, which would be better. The whole thing is still in the air—and until it's decided, and it doesn't look too promising—for so far my Boss insists on developing "local talent." In that case, I won't have anything to do with it.

Judy sends you her love, and yes, your flannel shirt will soon be returned to you. You had no right laughing at us when we sent for overcoats [in Rockport]. You yourself came to New York prepared for the Ice Age, apparently.

I hope you are well. And write to me when you get the chance.

David

P.S. I'm waiting to see how I like my revisions and then off my book goes again. I've become so accustomed to seeing it returned that I think I would be shocked to see it really taken. How long this letter is!

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I could see that David had many problems, but he didn't speak about them.

[Dolorously doleful, I only said
When you asked me for my life-story,]

I had picked up Karen Horney's book *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*. "If the recurring problems of neurotic persons are divested of the fantastic and abstruse character they often have, they differ only in quantity from the problems bothering the normal person in our culture. The great majority of us have to struggle with problems of competition, fears of failure, emotional isolation, distrust of others and of our own selves, to mention only a few of the problems that may be present in a neurosis."

["Well, the world is a funny place, un
Pleasant things can happen."]

W.C. WILLIAMS *The New Republic*, September 1938

Review of "US 1"

I hope Miss Rukeyser does not lose herself in her injudicious haste for a "cause," accepting, uncritically, what she does as satisfactory, her intentions being of the best. I hope she will stick it out the hardest way, a tough road, and invent! make the form that will embody her rare gifts of intelligence and passion for a social rebirth the chief object of her labors. Her passion will not be sacrificed, on the contrary it will be emphasized, by the success of such attention to technical detail. So will the revolution.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Each time the manuscript was returned, David revised it again—cutting and cutting. I was becoming increasingly concerned though I tried not to show it. David seemed more and more depressed.

[I chewed
The silence, cryptic and stupidly.]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

September 25, 1938

Dear Ben: When the bell rang and I found your book of poems, I was very happy, and far more excited than I have been in ages. It is one of the nice things about living—even today—that one can rejoice with the good fortune of friends. In fact, I carried the book to work with me, read it at work, during lunch, and last night and today.

The first thing that struck me was the high level of the writing. I can say, with no doubt at all, that it is a book that makes one glad to be a poet: unlike other books that are

being printed, it can be read through, from start to finish, without the glaring and horrible faults and flaws that blemish the best of modern writing, and that destroy the worst. Therefore, it seems to me that it is a book that confers honor on poetry, by its example of love, obedience to craft. I liked all your epigraphs—particularly the Burke;(but Dorotheus—was he only a Byzantine editor of Justinian's code, a lawyer lost in all those centuries? that's what the Encyclopedia says).

Furthermore, the arrangement of your poems—unlike the arbitrary divisions that bolster weak sentiment—has a definite reason for being. My only wonder is whether certain poems in "Ten Lyrics" were not early work: such poems as "The Duel" and "Orlando's Song" to my mind lack the fresh clean strokes of such perfect little poems as "Scherzo" and "March Cardinal," in which in a simple moment of time there is compact something dark and beyond the person. Although "The Duel" may be chronologically later, it seems to me to rely on artifice and it has a quality of *literature* about it. And that, incidentally, seems to me one defect: some of the poems do not entirely order experience anew out of the materials of living, but out of literary materials. Yet this is only partially true.

"Many Cradles" I greatly admire. Although you are no sympathiser with mysticism, I seem to feel in these poems the dark mysticism of the blood, a prophetic quickening, that, in its immobility to reasoning, in one way or another runs through the best of modern poetry. Incidentally, your changes in "Battery Park" are all for the better, to my thinking, except that I miss Albermarle, and the lifting of an entire dead era into life in that phrase, for which Babylons does not compensate me. And "Tarry, Delight," with its precise exploration of the no-man's-land of grief and joy, struck me this time as being a very forceable and complete poem.

But a book of poems is not reducible to an excellent craft or an excellent poem, today at least. What swings the

balance toward eternity must be the vision, the character and the vision. To me, at least, your book has integration, that although you call it—moments of an expanding record of change, produces one tone, one personality, and one grief, that grows in awareness, but not in method of vision; that is, the instrument changes, but not the eye and hand which record it. This seems especially marked in "Charwoman" where, with varying success, in a style that does not escape the hollowness of Crane's rhetoric at times—the light flings "the day's *drowned* faces out" and the poet is poised on the shaft-way for his own descent. "This is bitter water." And it is the "astonished dream of sailing," and "the element is blood." And "The Festival," a completely successful poem, and one of the best poems in our literature, seems to me another moment in this dark stream of blood.

Your poems stand up to the eye and to the mind's eye. If I have explained that they do not create the world anew, except as in the magnificent third section of "Battery Park," that is, it seems to me, because you are dealing with matter that is fluid. Sometimes it seems that it is an icy river, shining, until the diamond quality of its being, with the hiding of the light, becomes an utter sullen scar with black depths stretching under and under ....

Now, I didn't mean to write all this, but rather to tell you how much pleasure your poems have given me. What I have said I have offered in the hope that it may be of some service to you. "The Five-Fold Mesh" is of the rarest honesty; and it is a book of poems I am proud to think of.

David Schubert

October 1938: Britain and Germany Make Anti-War Pact
"Peace with Honor" Says Chamberlain
Prime Minister Widely Cheered by Relieved Londoners—King Welcomes Him at Palace

[I felt diminished by myself,]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David's impatience to have a book printed seemed to consume him. Perhaps, having been looked upon as something of a prodigy, he expected to become a renowned poet easily and quickly; perhaps he felt that fame would solve all of his problems. In any event, David decided to go to Columbia to get an M.A. in English in order to teach.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

October 23, 1938

Dear Ben, I've been head over heels in the struggles of the Victorians to retain their souls, and what with my own, I supposed that I'm almost ready to join the Red Front. But I think I'll wait, anyway. Meanwhile I'm not sure that all the lumber of scholarship is equal to the space ... but that's something that will have to be gone through I suppose .... The trouble is that I've come to feel that one must make a decisive choice—and that as much as anything else is at the bottom. But, instead of elaborating my own feelings, I want to say something that I meant to long before—I read your review in the *Times* and I certainly feel that the reviewer was right—in the statement of the proletarian problem in poetry and its solution .... My own interpretation of the poems as you know was a little different—and I wonder if "Battery Park" was done justice in the short summary, but it was a delight to see. And I have been looking at the *Nation* religiously each week so far.

I wonder what sort of person Blanche Knopf is. You see, I sent my ms. to Knopfs and heard from her; while she was abroad, or I thought she was, I sent it again, and heard from *her* again, this time that there was no room at the time. I suppose she *is* the poetry editor and poetry publisher too, but I didn't know what to make of it, and I don't think she knew what to make of my poems. Meanwhile, they're away again .... And [Reuel] Denney, is he

having any luck?

I'd like to see Bennington while there is yet one leaf on the tree, and so I'll be up this weekend, Saturday, unless I hear that it won't fit in with your plans. It will be good to see you .... And I bet you feel several cubits taller, I know I would ....

This poem, "The Seven Year Old Poets," seems to me rather loose metrically, and some of the lines rather lame, but I like it, although it's a long way off from the Rimbaud poems that I have read. You should certainly do more of them and gather them all together for a volume sometime. But then you don't have to be told to translate them.

And Judy sends her love to you.

David

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality* (1937)

The attitudes thus observable may be loosely classified as follows: first, attitudes concerning giving and getting affections; second, attitudes concerning evaluation of the self; third, attitudes concerning self-assertion; fourth, aggression; fifth, sexuality .... The question arises as to whether there are not likewise certain definite contradictions in our culture, which underlie the typical neurotic conflicts.

[much like
The passport photographs that make you look
Like an escaped convict]

January 1939: Albania
Annexed by Italy in Conscious
Imitation of Ancient Rome

The University of North Carolina Press planned a poetry series to be called Chapel Hill Poets. Allen Tate was to be the editor.

FROM BEN BELITT TO ALLEN TATE

April 30, 1939

Dear Mr. Tate: Thanks for your very kind note. The number of excellent young poets whose first volumes have been making the rounds without luck or hope of finding the audience they deserve has been steadily growing within recent years ....

I hope it is not impertinent of me to refer you to two interesting young poets with very respectable first books they have been trying to dispose of for some time—Reuel Denney ... and David Schubert (winner *Poetry's* Young Poet Prize). I have seen both volumes and consider them worth serious editorial attention. [Tate had already written to Denney and to Schubert.]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO ALLEN TATE

April 29, 1939

Dear Mr. Tate: I wish to thank you for your invitation to contribute my ms. to the series. You may certainly use my name, if you think it will interest subscribers in the Chapel Hill Poets Series. I cannot tell you definitely, however, whether my ms. will be available; someone has already asked for it and is attempting to place it. If your present plans materialize and my ms. is available, I should be very happy to contribute it to the series. In any case, I should be delighted to hear of the realisation of your plans.

Sincerely yours,
David Schubert

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

In August, David was asked to spend some time at the writer's colony, Yaddo. It was an opportunity we thought David needed. Once I was alone, however, I found myself very apprehensive. But when he returned three days later I was much more wretched. To me it was a very bad signal.

[Like an escaped convict or
The victim of circumstances.]

August 23, 1939: Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact Signed in Moscow

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

The first contradiction [in our culture which underlies the typical neurotic conflict] is that between competition and success on the one hand, and brotherly love and humility on the other.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Meantime Tate had resigned at North Carolina and the projected series appears to have come to nothing.

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

The second contradiction is that between the stimulation of our needs and our factual frustrations in satisfying them. The psychic consequence for the individual is a constant discrepancy between his desires and their fulfillment.

[I
Am the oyster shell, after the
Succulent seaworm's been devoured,]

September 1939: Poland Invaded by Germany and Crushed
Great Britain and France Declare War on Germany

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I finished the Horney book. It terrified me. I wrote Dr. Horney a long letter about David, and the desperation I felt. In no time there was a call from her office (she must have been a remarkably kind woman), and David, who knew I had written, went with me without question; I think he was relieved. After meeting with him alone, she then asked for me and said that she would arrange immediately for David to go into analysis. Soon after that David went into treatment with Dr. Ludwig Jekels, a refugee from Germany, a great old Moses who had studied with Freud, and of whom David became very fond.

[With only the pretense of sea in your cupped Ear.]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

October, 1939

Dear Ben, This letter, I'm afraid, is like a very archaic thing now, it is so long overdue, or like a doctor who comes after the patient is all well. Although it's me who's been the patient, not you, and it's not all over. What happened is that the elaborate web I've been building up has toppled—and I see the issues more clearly than ever, but I am not reconciled yet.

I certainly know how it feels to think that despair today cannot but be "obscene," as you have said. But the other avenue does not convince me, yet. I think that your "astonished dream of sailing," is perhaps the utmost affirmation that can be made .... Meanwhile I am groping

for a vision that will include and justify with *significance*. And that is so old-fashioned.

My work here, at school, is in the completely determinist tenor. They all know why Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Hopkins and everyone else in the 19th century failed, *inevitably*. I've been caught in a little rut of scholarship, thus far: the influence of the traveller on the Oriental novel of the Romantic Period—but that will soon be over, thank God!

I can't but feel that there is more room for *achievement*, even in scholarship—but perhaps it is my refusal to accept a closed universe that's at the bottom.

Meanwhile, I've been reading a good deal—Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice"—a consummate work of art which yet seems to me no solution; and some of the philosophers. I hope that something "rich and strange" will come out, somehow.

I certainly know what it is to be too busy with unimportant things, that give no time for oneself. I hope, however, that you've been able to get your hand on the Telescope Poem, even if you haven't yet finished it.

Please forgive this altogether too tardy reply. I think you will.

David

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO JULIUS BLOOM

October 1, 1939

Dear Jules, I felt ashamed after I talked to you the other night. I honestly haven't broken down that way with anyone before.

Your calling David seemed like a wonderful miracle. I wanted to write to you right away. This may help him in a way the Doctor won't—at least I don't have faith in The Doctor most of the time. If only David can regain some of his confidence.

Also, Jules, you can't imagine how hard it has been to scrape up money for the Doctor.

David tells me how fine you have been to him and

sometimes when he repeats your conversations I feel that you understand without being told—although David always said you were unusual to work for. He would be furious at my writing this note, but the more I thought of it, the more important it got, and it can't hurt him, can it?

This must sound silly to you, but I bless you with my whole heart. I guess there must be a God. This is what I really meant to say.

Judith

[I ... will study
These pansies, profoundest
Professors of the world's woes.]
"A Corsage"

III

THEODORE WEISS 1980

I arrived at Columbia University from Allentown Pennsylvania, only 100 miles from New York but light years away in pace, spirit, sophistication. I met David Schubert in one of my English graduate classes. Like me he was there for work toward a masters degree. He was only a few years older but in awareness and accomplishment much ahead. Inevitably by his work and his success—at least to me if not to him!—in publishing poems, a certain glamor haloed him for me. Also, his lithe intentness and intensity instantly struck one, a kind of blue light focused in his glance, often unblinkingly fixed, as though intelligence itself had materialized and emanated from far within.

For many reasons I was passing through a desolate period. My relationship with David and Judy, and a few other dear friends, their kindness, their affection, helped as much as anything to make that time endurable.

Of the occasions I recall, the many readings of poetry, the heated discussions, the amusements—for Charlie Chaplin-like in his demeanor and gestures, David was one of the drollest men, given to witticisms, verbal playfulness, imitations, mimetic antics—our singing, the three of us, with Judy at the piano, became a mad medley in which David would strike antic poses, make owl's eyes, plunge from falsetto to basso most profundo.

Once, most brotherly, and bitterly too, he said to me: "Ted, I beg of you, stay out of poetry. But if you have to write, find one way of looking and saying, one gimmick, and stick with that, hammer it in again and again. That way you'll get yourself known."

FROM BEN BELITT TO THE WEISSES

December 1980

Dear Ted and Renée: The odd thing is that I don't think of David in terms of episodes or anecdotes—though I see us walking rapidly all over Columbia Heights, talking drainingly and hard or feel the pressure and penetration of his presence.

THEODORE WEISS 1980

During this period, however, I was writing daily letters to Renée; these and her responses to them were my main anchor. I poured into them not only all my feelings and my loneliness, but countless observations—perhaps even lessons for Renée's and my married future.

November 1939: Russia Invades Finland

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

November 10, 1939

I slept at the Schubert's last night which means I didn't sleep at all. Talk about creative debauchery! I couldn't feel more shaky and ecstatically exhausted than I do after a verbal todo with David and Judy.

March 1940: A Japanese-Dominated Government Is Established in China
April: German Troops Invade Denmark and Norway
April 11, 1939: Loyalists Gain in Madrid Offensive

LOUISE BOGAN *The Nation*, April 13, 1940

The Defense of Belles-Lettres

Will the almost psychopathic hatred and distrust of 'pure' writing, fostered by political parties, continue or by degrees fade out? ... Can a review dedicated to disinterested comment upon literature and the life it at once derives from, deepens, and delights now survive, or are the guilt-fear-hatred hold-overs of the last decade still too unresolved to allow its survival?

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

1940

Dear Ben, I'm afraid this will be something like getting a letter from someone who's stopped living, and you get so accustomed to his silence that when he does reappear you haven't anything to say to him again. In my defense—and it isn't too good, I'm sure—the desert years seem to cling to me more and more. Every once in a while I think I'm out of it, but there are so many places in each day in which one falls onto nothing at all. But I'm making a battle with the Enemy, anyway.

Did you go for any deep sea fishing in Florida last winter, and were you successful with several excellent submarine poems? That's the first question, and the second is, how in the world are you. Much better, I hope, in your own battles .... Have you seen *The Nation* recently? Louise Bogan had a nice piece in it—a trifle scattered but good sense—on Art for My Sake, which delighted me a good deal. I'm reading Hans Christian Andersen these days, and finding a lot of fun and something of a self that he kept under cover in his stories and in himself.

Everything here goes in the same round—with but one slight variation. I have a vacation, from the office, for a few months, and I'm trying desperately to keep myself above ground and all in one. I have so many notes, sentences, phrases, ideas, that they'd make a complete library of several thousand volumes if I could ever do anything

with any of them. I'm afraid that I must sound like "a real village of sorrow," but it's the eloquence of the uninhabited. Perhaps a thought will soon come in to wake me up and to stay there.

I haven't seen Horace Gregory for some time now. I secured a lecture for him at the Institute, On Modern Poetry. It was supposed to be on Modern *Poets*. What he did was emphasize Modern—and the hour was taken up with a terrible discussion of "modern"—everything is modern at some modern time, and readings from Hopkins and Hardy, a sentence from Crane, a sentence from Eliot. It was really bad, but not the bad of just badness; the bad of, it seemed to me, a mind gone blank and disconnected, for nobody could have done so badly whom I admire as much as Horace. This sounds rather funny, but I think you'll get what I mean. I haven't seen him since, because I feel that all of us are rather embarrassed, and I've become additionally embarrased about my ms. about which he can't do anything, it seems, and so we keep a discreet silence.

Judy sends you her love, meanwhile, and I send my own. Let me hear from you, so that I can feel that you are, at least, living, and I am somewhat too.

David Schubert.

P.S. I just sent my ms. out to Knopf, but back it comes, my homing birds!

May-June 1940: Fall of the Netherlands and Belgium Chamberlain Resigns and Is Succeeded by Winston Churchill

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH *The Nation*, May 1940

The Irresponsibles

History, if honest history continues to be written, will have one question to ask of our generation—people like ourselves. It will be asked of the books we have written, the carbon copies of our correspondence, the photographs of our faces, the minutes of our meetings in the famous rooms before the portraits of our spiritual begetters. The question will be this: Why did the scholars and the writers of our generation in this country, witnesses as they were to the destruction of writing and of scholarship in great areas of Europe and to the exile and the imprisonment and murder of men whose crime was scholarship and writing—witness also to the rise in their own country of the same destructive forces with the same impulses, the same motives, the same means—why did the scholars and the writers of our generation in America fail to oppose those forces while they could ....

June-July 1940: Fall of France

EDMUND WILSON *The New Republic*, July 1940

Archibald MacLeish and "The Word"

Mr. Archibald MacLeish, in his new role of the Librarian of Congress ... has declared that the war novels of such writers as John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway ... in their railing against "the statements of conviction, of purpose and of belief on which the war of 1914-1918 was fought," have left the younger generation "defenseless against an enemy whose cynicism, whose brutality and whose stated intention to enslave present the issue of the future in moral terms—in terms of conviction and belief." Without, says Mr. MacLeish, attempting "to judge these writers," and confessing that he himself at one time indulged a similar impulse, he sternly insists that Dos

Passos, Hemingway and Company "must face the fact that the books they wrote in the years just after the War have done more to disarm democracy in the face of fascism than any other single influence." ... But at last he has been forced to recognize that "perhaps the luxury of the complete confession, the uttermost despair, the farthest doubt should be denied themselves by writers living in any but the most orderly and settled times." Well, you will not find the farthest doubt or the uttermost despair in the writers whom Mr. MacLeish mentions; they all believe pretty strongly in something. But even if you did ... should efforts really be made to dissuade them ... from truthfully expressing themselves?

The farthest doubt and the uttermost despair are, of course, not "luxuries" at all to anyone except a literary "irresponsible," who feels that he can choose his moods, as if they were suits from a well stocked wardrobe. They are the expressions of the bewilderment or the bitterness wrung from the human spirit by precisely those periods of history which are the reverse of orderly and settled.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

September 1940

Dear Renée, Though David on the surface is wounded and bewildered, at heart he is still brave, bright and singing.

August 1940: Battle of Britain.
British Fighters Lost—915.
Enemy Aircraft Lost—1733
(German Records). Enemy Aircraft Claimed by British—2698.

THEODORE WEISS 1980

I was writing with a furious, incessant, obsessive passion that I seemed to need to resist the time's overwhelming reality. And David was there as a model and a stimulus, almost an older, generous brother.

Frequently David would phone me to visit him in Brooklyn and walk with him. And for hours we tramped the city; miles and miles we traversed, he sometimes saying nothing, but fixed, electrical beside me, like that galvanic, somnambulist figure in *The Cabinet of Dr.*Caligari. So fiercely self-absorbed was he that nothing of him was left for the outside.

MURRAY SCHUBERT 1980

I remember a tug-of-war over me, between David and Dorothy and my father. He wanted me to go with him; they tried to prevent it. My father spoke harshly to David.

> [Star above, star below
> I never loved you ever, never]

I did stay one week with my father once, in the room he lived in. When, by the end of the week he said if I didn't like it I could leave, I left.

> [Star above, star below
> Too far to walk home, "Lord,
> It's too far to find the word"]

My sister and brother were very close. When my mother died they were sent to one set of relatives, I to another. But the relatives I went to had troubles and they separated and so I was sent to a boarding school. Dorothy always looked after David.

> ["What in the world shall we do," you said,
> "You're always six years behind. Wish I were dead."
> ...

The way is hard and wild and cold
And the heart—it cries like a lost child]
"The Lake"

I don't think my father actually abandoned the family while my mother was alive, but when the family was separated, I think David saw very little of him. My father was a loner; he wandered from job to job. And I don't think he liked David.

1940: Germans Abandon Plans
to Invade British Isles

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980
It seems to me that I learned it was David who discovered his mother dead when he returned home from school for lunch.

[It smells of smoke, carbolic acid;]

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL
October 29, 1940
Dear Renée, The Schuberts are terribly dear to me. Seeing how miserably much I miss you they insist I stay with them more often. But low as I usually am, so more susceptible, David is not too good an atmosphere: he's much too infectious. Only when I'm at my healthiest are we fine together; then I bolster him. The other day he went to Van Doren's class with me. He sat (as he is wont to do) with his wonderful luminous eyes staring inward till I thought any moment they would swallow him up entirely. He struggles with such a plethora of problems.

I've not been working on the poems. New ones won't allow it. David, however, has insisted it's high time I call a halt. And he proposed that as soon as he gets a grip on himself (whenever that will be! Poor fellow, he still enjoys

the fortunate illusion he's always just on the verge of recovery) he go through all my poems with me. That should prove an exceptional help. I did, however, already read a few poems to David and Judy that they liked very much.

[Its cigarette twitches like a heart]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I don't know what took me to Jekel's office, but whatever, he shook his head very sadly and said he was transferring my husband to another analyst, a younger man—Dr. Otto Sperling, whose office was located in Brooklyn. As kindly as he greeted me, he told me nothing more and I didn't ask; I never do. Dr. Jekel died shortly after.

October-November 1940: Axis
Moves in the Balkans
Germany Occupies Rumania
Italy Invades Greece

[It pulls like a kite. "Crying, you
Want to get off.]

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

Another contradiction exists between the alleged freedom of the individual and all his factual limitations .... What has been said facetiously of the impossibility of choosing one's parents can well be extended to life in general—choosing and succeeding in an occupation, choosing ways of recreation, choosing a mate. The result for the individual is a wavering between a feeling of boundless power in determining his own fate and a feeling of entire helplessness.

[Indeed all the tears are
Counted, one by one,"]
"The Snow in the Mouse Wind"

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

November 17, 1940

Dear Renée, Leaning on the Schubert-desk with the amber light embracing it, I listen a moment to the talking of my thoughts, thinking what words you would most like to receive from me, (David, lying on the bed in the opposite corner, mumbling to himself—whispering to God, then says to me: "The words are sure coming out fast, Teddy Bear," hearing the hurried scratching of my pen.) I listen a moment and all I hear for the moment is the humming bird radiator singing its bright promise of heat.

I shared this Saturday night with the Schuberts. Late afternoon now. I'm so bewildered. You feel certain you've made some progress in understanding people, telling kinds and characters apart, etc.; then something happens, a snow avalanche, and you land at the foot again.

As for environment vs. heredity, I'm inclined to believe that the emphasis (whether heredity or environment) depends almost wholly on the individual. If it is the run of the mill person you are contemplating, remarkably much can be done to salvage him from drossy living. But it seems to me environment has not too much to do with the really large person. All of us, of course, are somewhat vegetable, and deeply influenced by the world we live in; some of us, however, are infinitely more than this world. So we come into the world with needs; if we are vital, even out of apparent adversity we wring the food for these needs; if we are flickering and small we simply submit. One of the earmarks of superiority is the ability (and this is a requisite to genius) to derive spiritual nourishment from the environment around it, ugly, cruel, inhuman, poverty-stricken though it may be. Often, of course, by very hatred of such environment the artist wins through

to the opposite. Blake, Burns, Van Gogh, Daumier, Joyce, etc.

Why this geyser of generalizations? Simply this—I woke and arose about an hour or so earlier than David and Judy; so I went up on their roof. I came down. Judy and David had slept off sleep. We talked. A chance word set David off. As though huge piles of dry brush had been lying about, a most bitter fire broke out between Judy and David: they went at each other hammer and tongue. Though just a witness, near as they are to me, I felt terribly involved and even guilty (surely I had a finger in the fight). An hour-eternity they harangued each other, I acting the feeble umpire, Judy from the kitchen, David flaming back from the other room. Suddenly David stood up, said almost in glee, "I'll have to subdue her," (I expected some love-expression), dashed into the kitchen, grabbed Judy, smacked her, pushed her to the floor. So quickly it happened, so stunned and horrified was I, I hadn't time to utter one word of protest. Must such things happen to people cultivated even as the Schuberts? Are we all and always savages? Why all this effort then? Why all this schooling, this art, this music? Yet there are women, David later said, who require (enjoy) such treatment .... It implies such a bankruptcy of spirit, such an accumulation of hate, such a defeat of heart and head and triumph of brutality. (For David to raise his hand!) It indicates such utter confusion, such belittling of being, such chipping away at self.

I can blame neither David nor Judy (blame!): we are all such godforsaken victims, it seems; but surely there exist some dignity and the understanding of love? Why do we so often turn our weaknesses, our shortcomings, the hates we gather from the world around us, why do we turn these on the ones we love best? Judy tells me it (the fight, etc.) didn't mean anything. Just now David kisses her, makes a paper dunce-hat for her and puts her in the corner. She says something and immediately he begins to shout again.

Though we (and the world too) have agreed on the

close kinship between pleasure and pain, and though I can understand why a woman might momentarily thrill to the expression of caveman superiority on the part of her man, it seems to me the blow it must be to her sense of equality (or partnership) and dignity must ever thereafter seriously impair her own self-respect and foster a growing resentment.

But the role of the shrew (a woman gifted with a vicious tongue, one that as though by magic hits upon the most sensitive spots of a man) sometimes leaves him helpless and with no alternative but the hand.

Judy, I assure you, hardly liked it (anymore than David did). Both attempted to joke it away, but .... The act in itself is, of course, like most acts of violence unimportant; but the set of circumstances which produced it, the impasse it implies (mentally and emotionally), is of the utmost and discouraging significance.

[Built out of words, he sees her face
As something more and something less]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Whatever the case, until his emotional problems began to take over, David was easy to live with, generally sweet and mild.

[Than evergreen. The day will soon replace
Each feature with a feature that will then
Continue its pathos, unseen.]

Yet, for all of that, he was astonishingly possessive; still, except in our physical relationship, I can never recall his showing any overt affection toward anyone; such feeling as he did display came out in the few letters that he wrote, not including mine, however.

[—it asks to be
"A love that's total?" Continents of clouds
He reads, and the "I do," ironic, too.]

The times in our life when we were separated, usually twice a year, when I felt that I had to visit my parents, in the week (at the most) that I was away he would send one scribbled note that I could hardly decipher.

[Her form
...
Advances, is one step from paradise ...]
"The Letter"

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

December 1, 1940

Dear Renée, The conclusions, provisional of course, David and I came to—in themselves commonplace enough, but mighty important for the thinker to reach via his own head and heart ultimately—are that the individual is at bottom totally unimportant, simply an accident, a throw-off of the general energy—meaningful only insofar as he serves as voice for this energy, which never changes but delights in showing itself in a variety of forms. The more the individual acts as a vehicle for this energy (forgive the looseness of language; but what can we poor mortals do?) the larger he himself becomes. So though this energy, like its attributes love, etc., is anonymous and almost abstract, in that it expresses itself in accidental faces and actions these later somewhat participate in its importance. So even the adventitious becomes significant; and the more so, the more it reveals or the more we discover in it. This is where the hierarchy of values sets in: the artist must have his critical canon, well-sharpened so as to be able to select the choicest details.

Actually, I'm not the egotist (or at least the kind) you and I believe I am. To begin with, recognising the

unimportance and accidentality of the individual, when I think so highly of myself, I'm merely paying deference to the essential energy, expressing my gratitude for whatever grace this energy has given me.

What has this to do with writing? Well, stylistic tricks, personal twisting of language, are worthless and meretricious. Self-parading, ego-hugging, can never achieve excellence.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

December 10, 1940

I've just come into the Schubert's home, greeted by some never before heard symphonic music on full trumpets and by David sporting a dish towel (Judy's not yet home from work). I'm sitting now in David's private dovecot of a study, a tiny pocket of a room you nearly have to put on like a tightfitting uniform to get into. A fat central pole, running through the floor and ceiling leans up against me, David's typewriter crowds me.

David just now dashes in and insists on reading two poems he's written, very proudly, in his staccato style, one called "Lullaby" (I renamed it Lulu-by: David admitted its validity).

Lullaby from the Japanese

Koro, koro, nenkoroyo,
Where did your nurse go, my dear boy?
She went back home to see her parents.
Did she bring you back a pretty toy?

What did you get from your nurse, my dear boy,
What did she give you, sir?
A flute to play on all day long
And sleep when day is over.
Lulla, lulla, lullabye,
And sleep when day is over.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

December 25, 1940

Dear Renée, In the afternoon Judy phoned to invite me to a little Christmas evening party. I went against my better judgment. You know how little generally I relish parties. I figured, however, that anything would be superior to my own face and the profile of my poetising. I was wrong. Last year (was it?) I had attended a similar affair at the Schuberts with most depressing results; the depression repeated itself. The people (mostly married couples) were as dull as people can be en masse and still remain people. I don't know how or why David abides them. I'm not sure he does. Last year he walked out on them; this year he was better behaved; but several times he escaped into the silence of himself. I believe he accepts them on two counts: 1) for Judy's sake: she has a very inclusive and enthusiastic receptivity; 2) because of a desire to reach people other than himself. Anyway, the damn thing dragged itself out till about 4 o'clock.

[Most unexpectedly it happens, just
As you don't know what you say till you
Say it.]

1941: President Roosevelt Re-elected

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

January 12, 1941

Dear Renée, Friday I visited the Schuberts. After a long talk between David, Judy, and me (in which we finally decided that the true artist—particularly the poet—has no stake in this society: it recognises him instinctively as a prime enemy. The reason I stress the poet is because in the past the poet was generally revered and placed in a position of high importance: Sophocles, Aeschylus,

Dante, Goethe, Chaucer, even Shakespeare—as men they were integral to the state. The attitude today, however, is diametrically opposite. Consequently, the poet must choose one of two alternatives—both extremely distressing: compromise—find some small, anonymous, and distracting job he can neither greatly respect nor use, or defiance—refusing to come to terms, writing out of his Promethean conviction, and soon dying starved, broken, yet victorious in sacrifice.

David and I took a long moonlit walk in which, for the moon's loveliness, even the cold was breathless (and warm) and the wind.

Yes, David's and my friendship, should I say love? resembles your description. Disclosing the traits in ourselves we most dislike, to each other, in the light of the other's considerateness and love even these traits become lovely.

[Like all people, she spoke
By contradictions, so that I had to hear
The negatives of her remarks to find out
How much I liked her.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

A fire broke out in our brownstone, which opened the other tenants' doors, led various ones of us to go about perusing our neighbors' book shelves, and so we and the Bernsteins found each other.

At the Bernsteins' small parties we would dance or talk about Hitler and politics with Marshall Shulman, who was brilliant, and Danny Lang. Inevitably talk would turn to *Time* and *Life* and gossip about one or another of its reports, and how one got a job on either. David had dreams of writing for *Time*, too, but his main concern was getting his book of poems published. Some of David's Amherst friends crossed our path, too.

January 1941: President given unlimited authority to lend war equipment.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

January 15, 1941

Dear Renée, Last evening visiting the Schuberts, I was just about submerged in talk concerned with political problems. Several weeks ago a fire broke out in the Schubert building; as a consequence, they met some downstairs neighbors: these people, a young married couple, were at the Schuberts' when I arrived. Both, and very nice they are, are perfervid Democrats (with a capital D); the husband is unusually well informed (his work). So we harangued the night away with our "time-talk." After they left, I suggested to David that I was finding such discussion and consideration, for me at least, more and more barren. He agreed, and we finally concluded that tyrants and war (sad to say) had always been and quite possibly would always be; despite the destruction, death and suffering they spread, they can be important only in a negative way. Do I sound horribly callous? I am interested (or would like at my best to be) in the quality, not the quantity, of suffering, feeling, thinking. By the way, did you know that James Joyce died? I just learned of it last night. And a hard blow it was. What a lot of best-men have been dying! What a lot of death there's around to take care of in thinking and feeling! Last night, pondering the clumsy dilemma of death—the mind cannot at all really cope with it—I was as cold, lonely, and forlorn as I've ever been.

[She looked at me
Alternately too severe and too
Gentle.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David often worked quite late at night at the office, especially before the magazine came out.

HORACE GREGORY *Decision*, February 1941

American Poetry 1930-1940

... The symptoms of the past ten years have been read with greater frequency and with greater interest than at any time in recent literary history. Quite for its own sake, the exciting, nervous chart has been consulted at each wide fluctuation of literary values; certain charts shifted their symbols from behaviorism to Marxism, from agrarianism to semantics and in others parallels were drawn between the economic depression in the United States and its sharp reflection in poetic literature. The decade has been called a "political decade" and "America in Midpassage", as though, in the latter, the transition period of young American writers in Paris between 1918 and 1930 had been extended for another ten years; critical attitudes have been self-consciously renamed and reaffirmed so often within these brief ten years that one thinks of time spent between them in Mr. W.H. Auden's phrase, "a low, dishonest decade."

Knowing the existence of the charts, we should agree, I think, that the chief external behavior of the last decade has been political .... Yet the years, 1930-1940, have witnessed the publication and continuous discussion of poetry by Mr. Wallace Stevens, Dr. William Carlos Williams, Miss Marianne Moore, the late Sara Teasdale and Elinor Wylie, Mr. E.E. Cummings, the late Hart Crane, Miss Laura Riding, Mr. John Gould Fletcher, H.D., Mr. Allen Tate. Mr. Archibald MacLeish, Mr. Robinson Jeffers—and this incomplete and varied list (and with the coupling of names that tend to blur or confuse the distinctions which should be made between them) one should not forget the publication of Mr. T.S. Eliot's collected poems,

nor the collected poems of the late W.B. Yeats or recently, the late Professor Housman's. The influence that this list exerts should not be underestimated; nor should we take the view that poetry itself is dying because popular fiction is reviewed on the front pages of Sunday book sections, or that the twentieth century with its frail hopes, its premonitions of disaster, its neurotic disillusionments, its distracting history of a war in Europe, foreshadows the death of all imaginative literature .... Even now it seems that younger poets are less concerned with the reshaping of political events than their predecessors of the nineteen-thirties, that certain lyric forms in poetry are being rediscovered with fresh enthusiasm, that there will be less talk of "movements" and "directions" in poetry, that the poetry of certan elder poets will be revived, that current uses of the pronoun "i" will not be discouraged, and that poetry will continue its role as the most enduring medium of imaginative literature.

1940: *Five Young American Poets* includes the work of Mary Barnard, George Marion O'Donnell, John Berryman, Randall Jarrell, W.R. Moses.

[Expectancy
Makes me slightly sick, as when years ago,
Hungry for food, I came to friends and they
Talked;]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

February 11, 1941

Dear Ben, At last I've some news for you. It's about Laughlin and I hope that your head—when last heard of, it was in the sands of Key West with a lot of sun on it and

some poems just out of reach—has caught the poems as well as the sun—and can take a minute out for me. First of all, I ought to bring my own Laughlin up to date. I've always had the impression he was a very fashionable person—perhaps because I didn't share his fashions and I didn't think he cared about mine. Anyway, last August I sent my stuff to him for the *Poet of the Month* series. He said it was too late and would I like to try February for the Five Young Americans series.

Your card set me off, and I sent my poems. They looked very very good to me. I wrote a formal letter mentioning only the places I had printed and the anthologies, and such matter. I said nothing about the *Five Young American Poets*. I don't care much about being young. I didn't like the poets of 1940 and it was impossible for me to find the slightest youth in them anyway. The Poet of the Month whom I had seen, Williams' *Broken Span*, didn't add, in my opinion, either to Williams or to New Directions. What I wanted of course was a book, and I hoped he would publish it for me.

This is the letter I got today; it wasn't a letter, it was a card, "Dear Schubert, I think they're pretty good poems. I would like to have you enter them in the competition for a place in the 1941 edition of *Five Young American Poets*. I think, at this writing, you would stand a very good chance. Failing that I would think of a number in the *Poet of the Month* Series in 1942, this year being all filled up. Let me know what you think. The judging for the 1941 FYAP would come off about June or so. Shall I keep the thing till then?

By the way, would you like to be an agent for the *Poet of the Month* Series? Have you seen them? A good way to make some extra money, I think, if you know many literary people. Yours, ... "

I suppose I'm silly but I don't like the informal tone of all this. And I think he "thinks" an awful lot, and it leaves me altogether as up in the air as an unsatisfactory girl

when one was very young, and really, don't you *think* it's a rather feminine note? Then, too, I'm not exactly pleased with the business of knowing many literary people. So you see there's a lot I don't like. My acquaintance with literary people is rather limited; I think only of you with real friendship. Gregory I still like, but I still haven't seen him and I still don't want to. (Did you see the current *Decision*? There's an exchange of letters between Dillon and Gregory. H.G. can back out of a situation less gracefully and more quickly than any other writer alive, it appears. It's a rather shameful exhibition of a lack of psychological, literary, poetical, all kinds of skill. Why not say outright he thought Dillon stinks, and *Poetry* too as he really does "think." Or as he used to, at any rate. They're both good shadow boxers however, only this time D. got the punch in.) To get back to Laughlin again,—and what *is* a literary agent? do you know? Should I be pleased or not? Right now, I'm suspicious.

I'm sure I'm exaggerating the whole business. As I look back at Laughlin's note it doesn't seem quite so terrible. I suppose I should be glad, because it had seemed quite hopeless getting my things out. And yet this isn't the way I had hoped to be received—if I really am received. What do you feel about Laughlin and this note in particular?

I'm sending you a few poems which will appear soon in *Partisan Review* and *Accent*. "The Simple Scale," an unfinished version of which you saw some time ago, seems very nice to me; it's of course the most ambitious of the lot.

I'm at last attacking the mountain of notes, unfinished work, systematically. So far it's taking the form of a novel, but where it goes from here I am not too sure. It's a lot of fun setting down truths, of observation and insight, and less requiring than poetry for which I have to be at the most complete functioning to really satisfy myself. I think if I work regularly I will manage to hit off the springs I'm looking for. They are certainly underground. Meanwhile I have accumulated a tremendous knowledge of suffering

and persons; I still can use it even in a plodding moment. Just what the allegorical expression will finally take I am not sure. You have to work so far out of experience and then you have to come back to experience and the criss-cross is so difficult and dangerous that I do not see how it is possible not to be lost at one time or another. I am rereading Dante and the Bible. My favorite quotation these days is still in canto 1, "how I came there I do not know so full of sleep was I." The full of sleep is, I believe, exact.

I had been shirking the task of continuing when there isn't anything one particularly wants anyway, but I'm slowly awaking. I'm awaking, unfortunately, with a most terrific contempt of my contemporaries; not the contempt of frustration, which, to my mind, Peak showed—you remember his complete dismissal of all modern literature on the ground of its ambition, which is too simple; a contempt rather at the smallness of the personalities at work; there seem to be so few people with any charity in them at all, who even know that a prejudice can be stripped away and broken.

But I think I shouldn't think, anyway; right now I wanted to say that MacLeod had me speak at the YMHA. I was amazed at the intelligent interest of the audience. It is a fine place to speak in. MacLeod had been, he told me, completely swamped by the Communist flood; that whole period created an air very similar to certain abnormal mental states and made writing almost impossible, he, too, thinks. I believe he may have a fine gift for external observation and action. He has a novel coming out on Montana which I shall look at when it comes out. I have a suspicion that he is only beginning to find his direction ... and I hope that he does find it.

I remember that you were thinking of some prose work. Have you made a step in it?

That's all for now, except that Judy too sends her love.

David

DECISION (Letters) February 1941

In your January issue Mr. Horace Gregory offers a list of publications which have contributed to the development of the art of poetry in recent years. The omission of *Poetry* from the list amounts to a piece of misinformation, for it will undoubtedly lead some of your readers to believe that the magazine is no longer being published ....

Sincerely yours,
George Dillon

The purpose of the list was to show that poetry as an art has many lively, generally unknown and new sources of publication, and that it is not dead .... Let me assure Mr. Dillon that for the present I am not concerned with what he may feel are the limitations of his magazine, and in saying this, I hope that he will not again conclude that I harbor "personal hostility" against him and his magazine.

Sincerely
Horace Gregory

[now I wait for her to speak
The meanings which I must negate before
I am admitted to the gayest person.]
"Victor Record Catalog"

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

In bed, one night, David told me that he had been seeing someone who worked at the Institute. I got the feeling that she was young and tender and pretty. I was terribly, terribly hurt—and perhaps angry too.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

March 18, 1941

Dear Renée, I found a note at Columbia Sunday from David explaining—apologizing for his not coming to see me (Saturday) as he had planned. He insisted I visit them. Thus last night, against my better judgment, I ventured

out into the dark wildness. What a wilderness of wind! It struck the face like a forest of prickly trees.

Well, I arrived at the Schuberts to find that Judy had gone out to a "must" teachers meeting. The Schubert apartment, perched as it is nakedly on the top of its building, almost asks to be attacked. Anyway, it seems the winds had decided on it as the lucky bearer of the brunt of their besieging. Again and again with the whole weight of their bodies they hurled themselves against the wall. And while they nearly blew the place down, David and I sat huddled in the kitchen before the all-burning fires of the gas-stove and the fireplace of our words. We did our best to set a conflagration of thinking going around us. The winds persistently shouted us down. And I had little more than David's ego to keep me warm. You think mine bad? Well, nightlong he pumped me for particular praise of the novel he's written (I had read about half of it), fed me such leading remarks as "Don't you really think it one of the great masterpieces of prose?!" As I suggested to him, but obliquely (and he too involved in his ego to appreciate the innuendo!), he had so monopolized the territory of self flattery there wasn't any room left for me to fill. Well, this went on amid the cold till two o'clock and still no Judy. I intimated he might begin to worry about her. Valiantly, he set himself to do so, heroically pulled himself away out of the quicksands of self. As you know, I'm hardly one to deplore ego—in fact in some respects (probably when I find it respectable!) I applaud it; for the artist it's nearly inevitable—an evil essential: it affords him a focus and a vantage point from which to view the rest of the world. The danger is, of course, that of doing the Narcissus act—falling in love with the focus and so seeing nothing else. It's only when the artist recognizes himself and then steps over himself to other things, that he truly puts himself to best use. Probably, therefore, a large portion of my objection to David's attitude stems from the fact that his ego was trampling mine! In the past, however, when David's self-wonder and worship has been equally

unbridled, and when I've not been cold in and out, I've heard much to amuse and even delight me in David's peacockeries. Often he's very boyish and ingenuous about it, and therefore quite infectious.

"In the next twenty years," David continues (!) "if I write the other two novels I'm planning, I'll be the most influential man in America—except for Roosevelt." Vanity and death—they're with man constantly. About two o'clock Judy telephoned, saying she'd be home soon. David naturally inquired several times as to her whereabouts. She refused to answer. So he hung up in anger. More than an hour later, she arrived. As she came in she giggled; David welcomed her with a "Be a litle more careful with your lipstick!" Though I usually spend the night with them, I decided that this was definitely where I came in; so I made a quick exit.

Cold with dread and pain for them, unable to avoid their preliminary reciprocal scathing remarks, I could scarcely help thinking of the suspicion and jealousy that crackled in that room, and the mutual (if only momentary) hate. Judy was probably guilty of nothing more than arousing David's fears, but—!!

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Actually I had called a friend whom I had found very attractive. He took me to a fine restaurant and then to his apartment. We kissed, but nothing else. I'm a firm believer in faithfulness.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

March 23, 1941

Dear Renée, Yes, David's finished his novel and submitted it too. What do I think of it? Well, I read over half, but I can hardly speak of it as a unity. In spots what I saw is plainly brilliant; daringly, yet without seeming effort, David breaks through the trammels of literary traditions; almost as much as I can imagine, his characters think and speak as they think and speak. But his episodes (the

material and treatment is episodic) are arbitrarily selected, often uneven, and therefore sometimes monotonous. Moreover, in his deliberate disregard of direction David may be neglecting what is after all the lifeblood of (at least prose) writing—plot. But I reserve judgment till I read the whole.

THEODORE WEISS 1980

All I remember now is the novel's opening line: "Outside it was Tuesday." Inside it must have been the well-kept weekday of Hell.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Although I had a very brief contact with both psychiatrists, a much younger man, Dr. Sperling, seemed a very different personality from the warm, fatherly Dr. Jekel. Yet certainly David seemed completely accepting of him, and a good sign may have been in the novel he undertook, while in treatment. In a Joycean vein, and undoubtedly about his own life, it was a startling document.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

March 27, 1941

Dear Renée, Yesterday David phoned me; I'm to visit the Schuberts this evening. His book, he told me very tremulously, has been rejected by the publishers he submitted it to—though with the greatest flattery. The trouble, they assured him (he read the letter to me), is not with the writer, but with the material! This is one of David's charming qualities: he seldom conceals his true feelings. So his voice came over the phone, shaken, hurt, incredulous, uncertain, like that of a young boy who had just been reprimanded. I find this (naturally) as touching as I found the other (ego-flaunting) nettling.

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

Everyone is the real or potential competitor of everyone else. This situation is clearly apparent among members of the same occupational group, regardless of strivings to be fair or of attempts to camouflage by polite considerateness. It must be emphasized, however, that competitiveness, and the potential hostility that accompanies it, pervades all human relationships .... It remains one of Freud's great achievements to have seen the role of rivalry in the family, as expressed in his concept of the Oedipus complex and in other hypotheses. It must be added, however, that this rivalry itself is not biologically conditioned but is a result of given cultural conditions and, ... that the competitive stimuli are active from the cradle to the grave.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

In 1941 Dorothy, David's sister, got married. It was the one time I saw David's father.

[This man, who suddenly appears out of my past
...
It was a marriage.]

There were relatives. It was, I think, a traditional Jewish wedding. David's father was rather tall and thin—bony, with, as I remember it, a sardonic wit, wry and well-spoken. David talked very little with him.

[I felt sorry for him. I who had
Hated him so, didn't even dislike
Him. Until he opened his mouth.
His barbaric yawp chased me across the roofs
Of the world, into childhood, where, I am ashamed to
Say, most cordially, most fervently, I detested.]
"The Skeleton in the Closet"

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

March 28, 1941

Dear Renée, Judy accused me of being soft. "You should get a job in some bookstore here, making $18.00 a week, and then bring Renée to New York." I replied that such jobs weren't as abundant as she seemed to imply (Why doesn't David get one? For she had said that David would be infinitely happier if he didn't have to depend on her. Furthermore, she may lose her job any day: her school's on the verge of collapse.) She agreed with this. Then I said I could see precious little future in such work. This she also admitted. So where are we?

The whole morning and noon I remained with David, he lamenting the madness, brutality, and barbarism of our society, totally indifferent—except for animosity—to culture and art, till I had to leave him, nearly prostrate spiritually. What he says is terribly true. Artists are more and more the pariahs of our world. Thus here is David, in many respects as talented a person as I've met, yet he cannot find a job, can't find a place in the world to stand on.

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

The potential for hostile tension between individuals results in a constant generation of fear—fear of the potential hostility of others, reinforced by a fear of retaliation for hostilities of one's own. Another important source of fear, ... the fear of failure, is a realistic one because, in general, the chances of failing are much greater than those of succeeding, and because failures in a competitive society entail a realistic frustration of needs. They mean not only economic insecurity, but also loss of prestige and all kinds of emotional frustrations.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

March 30, 1941

Dear Renée, Did I repeat to you that not only was David contrition itself for his other day egoing, but he also asked me to reread and write criticism of his book in its pages'

margins? I then remarked the weaknesses I had noticed in his book, weaknesses I before had not had the heart to suggest. Yea-saying the validity of my criticism, assuring me that he values my comments more than anyone else's, he requested me to criticize the work formally.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

March 31, 1941

Dear Renée, Last evening I visited the Schuberts. I took along some five poems. Judy who is probably the most caustic critic *I* personally have met (so I'm often almost afraid to show poems to her) burst out after reading one "how utterly charming!" And David glowed at me.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

April 18, 1941

Dear Renée, Yesterday David visited me; about ten oclock I took him over to the Paul Weisses [friends at Columbia]. The evening—we stayed there till almost 3!—went off rather well. David delivered himself of universals that pleased me exceedingly much—namely, the world (men) changes but little; this age is no better, no worse than any other; happiness is the rule (else people would commit mass suicide); people still have high morals, etc., in short he was uttering sentiments I've tried to convince him of all the time I've known him. In the past he's been prone to extreme depression and pessimism.

THEODORE WEISS 1980

Often David would phone me at Columbia to listen to a poem he was working on. A few days later he would call again to read a revised version of the poem which I had thought wonderful in the first place. It was now about half its size. Another interval and another call, with the poem now a third as long. A fourth, the poem only a few lines. And then complete silence.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

April 29, 1941

Dear Renée, It's amazing, the proportions of David's ego. Sitting alone with him, he busy carrying the burden of his "greatness", I realise how terribly much the image of his "genius" has taken hold of him. Thus he's walking me to the subway and he suddenly stops to ask me, "How is it Ted, I feel, I am! such a genius?" Yet it's not too noxious; for he's like a little child in this attitude: almost the way a little boy asks his father, "Why is green? is sky?"or "Why do I have five fingers?" So long as he can salvage only his humility, say, before his "genius," he's not too bad; but what if even that were swallowed up by his ego were he fully recognized? Then I fear he'd become impossible.

Sometimes he and I are like two proud blades biting away at each other; yet this way we hone each other.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

May 4, 1941

Dear Renée, It's after lunch Sunday. I spent last evening, overnight, breakfast, and a large part of the morning with the Schuberts. It's dreadful truly the way Judy and David bicker sometimes over a single word-selection or tone of voice. "You're too emphatic!" David shouts emphatically with brimming bitterness. Generally it's overwhelmingly David's fault. He's easily the most irascible person I know; he may be experiencing some unhappy thought or mood and he immediately pins it on poor Judy by selecting some minute fleck of speech or gesture as the cause.

EDA LOU WALTON *New York Times*, 1941

The Disciplined Poetry of Ben Belitt:
The Five-Fold Mesh

These lyrics written over a period of eight years and now arranged by Mr. Belitt to suggested a "discipline of integration" prove this young poet, to my mind, the most talented and interesting of the younger generation of

American poets .... His last poems show him able to combine the personal revelation with the impersonal and dramatic projection of life, to talk in terms of himself and of mankind without confusion—without the confusion apparent in the poetry of those earnest revolutionary writers who wish to identify themselves with a class to which they do not belong and which they cannot evaluate. If he progresses artistically toward making a synthesis of experience personal and social, Mr. Belitt will be an important figure to watch, a poet with something to say of significance today.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

May 11, 1941

Dear Renée, I spent Sunday evening and Monday morning at the Schuberts' and almost all of the morning buoying David's spirit. His book was returned again. Infuriated, he tore up the manuscript (Judy doesn't know!). I told him what a stupid act I thought this. Slowly, and to his chagrin, he agreed. So I took him home and got him to work at once, resurrecting the parts he could remember and casting them into a long narrative poem. David took to the idea like wildfire, became wildly enthusiastic and excited, sat down at the typewriter and banged out eight, nine sheets of it, thrust them at me till I had to leave out of self-preservation. Several times David hurled at me "Gee, Ted, I'll have to see you much more often," "Yes," I replied, saying to myself meantime, "Not if I want to keep alive." You see, endeavoring to cheer him up, I consume almost all my energy by the time I succeed; when he's finally humming—crackling like a merriest bonfire, I'm all burned out. And yet I scarcely regret it, for buoying him up I do somewhat buoy me up: it's contagious. But he's too tight (like a fist) and chaotic too for me in long doses.

All these factors together—competitiveness and its potential hostilities between fellow-beings, fears, diminished self-esteem—result psychologically in the individual feeling that he is isolated. Even when he has many contacts with others, even when he is happily married, he is emotionally isolated. Emotional isolation is hard for anyone to endure; it becomes a calamity, however, if it coincides with apprehensions and uncertainties about one's self.

May 16, 1941: President Roosevelt Proclaims Unlimited National Emergency

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

May 21,1941

Dear Renée, About nine o'clock this morning Judy telephoned. She was deeply concerned about David, about leaving him alone. Apparently he and she had had some falling out regarding his novel that he threw away. Hyperhypersensitive as David is, it must have thoroughly depressed him. Judy was afraid of what his mood might do to him. So she called me, begged me to telephone him at once and persuade him to visit me for the day. I did so. David replied in a very scattered voice—a chaos he tried to conceal for my sake. I feigned our sunny usualness and asked him over. He assented, "I'll come about four." "Oh, couldn't you come sooner?" I protested. "All right, around two; but I have to hurry now," and before I could say another word, he left. Well here it is after four o'clock and still no David! I've telephoned his place three times, but I've had no response. Really, I'm much worried about him. Then to top it off you don't write me.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

May 27, 1941

Dear Renée, This evening I'm visiting the Schuberts—Oh, yes, David finally turned up! Around five o'clock when for you and him I was biting tomorrow's and the next day's fingernails, Judy called. Entirely apologetic; she begged my forgiveness for David: he had simply walked off with himself—a little like kidnapping—had roamed the streets all afternoon looking for peace and himself. When he at last remembered his visit to me he was too ashamed to telephone, so he had Judy do it. Well, the upshot of it was they asked me to visit them.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO BEN BELITT

May 31, 1941

Dear Ben, I've been writing this letter to you, many times, so that this is the belated copy of a belated copy of a letter that tells you, first of all, that not you and your poems are at fault, but me myself. I'm starting anew, from the beginning of your letter. I'll pretend that not too much time has passed. First of all then, Judy and I had guessed that Laughlin's letter should be translated from the Yalese into something like a backward compliment. I still dislike Yalese, and years ago, when I lived in Connecticut, I disliked the Yale Library too.

I wrote him a note offering myself to the selling of the *Poet of the Month* books. He wrote back very happy, he seems a very happy person, telling me that he was glad and that it (proceeds from sales) would go on and on, just like life-insurance. I've apparently died in that life-insurance, for I've received nothing to sell, and I'm not too disappointed. The poems—either, or—are still to be decided on by Laughlin. He'll let me know sometime in June, I believe.

The prose piece, which I'd finished and was up to my expectations, I think, I finally tore up. I'll probably do it again, soon, and this time I want it to go beyond my expectations.

What you say about my poems I have thought over very carefully. I am very grateful for your criticism which is—in its reproach as in its praise—an honor. I had hoped that the "Boy Infant" escaped sentimentalism—being the deliberate expression of emotion without a channel or even a definite target, all so goddam characteristic of our time. So that so many days pass, in which one could just tear the hair out, or weep with nausea at the spectacle of events. There is a center in the poems, but I like to hide it. When I'm not feeling well, it hides from me. I wonder where the serenity that I wanted, and at times had, is all gone.

And this brings me to where I started from, to your poems. In "Vermont Quarry," which I think is a very beautiful and successful poem, and in "Moby Dick," you seem to me to have employed that style which is most your own. I like your starting-point, and your range in thought and imagination, and your return, the parable effect, as it were. At the end I found these poems not nearly as simple as they look; with the virtues that I greatly admire—a clean, cold, and restrained construction that covers a millenial patience. These words are, of course, a breakdown of what is, I suppose, a feeling of time on time, and unhuman change. To me, these poems come as close to translating the scientific memory of the earth and human life as any I know. Therefore, they are much more honest and brave than to my mind the other style that you employ. Individually, "Vermont Quarry" seems to me the better poem, because I am not sure that the lines after "For the white whale-hump and the spearer," add much to what you have already implied. They do not seem to me, line for line, as compact as the previous; although your last line, "the pat verge of the hedge," seems to me very fine indeed.

The other poems seem to me to have a greater violence of expression than the material bears: that in general the emotion is verbal. The words get in the way of my feeling. I don't get the strident, "strenuous," vehement

quality that I believe you want. Of course there are different ears to Heaven. I think that gentleness is perhaps the greatest violence. Of these poems I liked best "Dance Piece" and "Tourist and Turtles." Shouldn't the last line be "And strike a strenuous sweetness out of brine?" The only poem I did not like at all was "Another Sorrowing Mother," [published as "Speech for Mary"] although its images were ingenious.

I make these remarks only tentatively, without any belief that I am voicing any ultimate judgment at all. To keep up any sort of standards today is a heroic task, and all your poems are dedicated to that.

About myself, we just had our place painted that tardy spring green and yellow which you promised to see for yourself. When you come, we have a little room that has been fixed over, and is waiting to have you visit it.

Affectionately,
David

June 1941: German and Italian Consulates Ordered Closed

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

June 6, 1941

Dear Renée, I'm staying a few days at the Schuberts before coming to Allentown for the summer. Loaded with luggage, I climbed to their apartment. When I at last reached the 7000th floor the Schuberts' apartment is on, David welcomed me with Herrick. And a very delightful relaxation it was, David's poem-reading. Herrick has that gay blithe profundity, a laughter that puts all the terribly serious, terribly "profound" people to shame. His tone—lightness, ease, fun—is that which one finds at the beating heart of the greatest writing: Shakespeare even at his most somber and intense moments rarely forgets this; or this is the tone of energy, exuberance, and so sublimity. Herrick wears the world—all its tribulations, as well as its

happinesses—a rose in his buttonhole. By being playful he can say anything—even the most horrible—and we gladly accept it: this is because he's shed the human light over all: he's humanised everything, made it man-and-woman livable.

June 1941: Germany Invades Russia

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

June 8, 1941

Dear Renée, What a cockeyed world are David and Judy, especially living with them. Casual breakfast words of a sudden bonfire into ripest argument. Judy sides with "practicality," David with the "Platonic" (ideals). Swiftly they're at each other. David is walking through the rooms, just having left a long speech he's made: suddenly he stops, lifts his finger to his lips in a loud shush, this though no one's saying a word—as though he's trying to hush the loud voices in his own head. And Judy asks me, "I bet you find it hard to live with us, don't you?" I beg her not to ask me embarrassing questions. Then she wants to know if it's easier to be with her or with David! She's in the other room as she asks this, and David whispers—implores me to say him. Really, living with them is like climbing rockiest mountains! I hope I can last the week through! They're petulant, paper-tearing like children. Yet I truly love them, but I'd rather not live with them.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

June 9, 1941

Dear Renée, Why then am I here, living with these terribly crowded and crowding Schuberts? Talk about hitching your wagon to a star: being with David is like hitching yourself to a falling meteor and volcano combined. Beware of these "hypersensitive," "superintellectual," "superiorly neurotic" people. Yet I'm all of me fond of

them, poor, harried dears! David's such a gentling fantastic, sometimes utterly the child. A moment ago, for example, he noticed his name on your envelope (write to me, Renée, but below my name c/o David Schubert): instantly he was completely possessed: "Gee! I've never seen my name like this before! Usually when letters are written to me I don't even notice my name. But here where it's about me, but not me, I see myself for the first time." And he carried the envelope around for several minutes, staring at it, as though it were some most prodigious charm. "It makes me feel so out of myself; yet here I am all of me." I'm writing as he says this; so I merely nod my head. Suddenly he demands, "Tell me, Ted, do you think I'll be recognised as a great poet some day?" I groan, "He's in again!" and return totally submerged to my letter writing. Of course, much of this is pose, but it's an obvious one, a pose to please and so occasionally most pleasing. Then he suggested, "When you get to Allentown will you have at least three of your friends write my name on an envelope and mail them to me? I want to see how those will affect me." At this he fell on the bed, "I'm exhausted." I asked if his name had tuckered him out! It's a fantasy world he lives in, and deliberately, half the time. Yet an hour or so ago he took me to task for being too "playful," not nearly "serious" enough in my writing. "I want to see you succeed," he said. "When you marry you must have Renée keep at you all the time, not to allow any funny business. That's what I've taught Judy to be with me—hard!"

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

June 10, 1941

Dear Renée, Not of course that the Schuberts are difficult to me. On the contrary. Judy is as considerate, but not so pesky, as a mother—and fair too. She doesn't favor David, even though of course she naturally and rightly does. And David manfully struggles up from the depths of his depression or quicksand thinking to bring me a smile.

Last night David tried to impress me with the fact of

the impossibility of poetry in a time like ours. He insisted that there's nothing worse, more miserable, or lonely than a failure in society (so he considers himself). "Had I realized years ago what I was getting into, I'd have never gone into poetry." He assured me I must work like the devil ("put everything you've got behind it") this coming year so as to secure my position in society. "You're young now, but what if a few years blight your lightness, what then?"

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO RENÉE KAROL

June 11, 1941

Dear Renée, What a person is this David Schubert. No matter what he does or becomes, I know there is greatness in him. Everything is high intensity with him. Last evening David and I spent quite a few hours fitting and hanging a bamboo screen between the kitchen and the living room. With what fired seriousness he threw himself into the doing—as though the lives of millions depended wholly on his every move. With such almost harsh flame he burns away the minutes of each day—a crackling brush fire.

A little while ago we returned from a short crisp walk (we take one every day). Striding through the Brooklyn streets, more varied and distracting than a three ring circus, we proceed in quiet, vast desert stretches, for the longest periods of time, David wandering lost in some silence of his own. Suddenly one of us drops a word and conversation flares up. Thus today we discussed the isolation and essential loneliness, really a desolation almost, of the greatest greats, the Dantes and the Beethovens, the Cézannes and the Rilkes—how exiled they are by their art. By contrast with the problems this presents, the social scene (making a living, fitting into society, etc.) is nearly a digression and diversion too. Society has always been essentially the same and of no essential importance as an influence on such people who would have expressed themselves precisely no matter what era or locality. By their very flame few people can come near them, can endure them. Theirs is really a bitter victory. For like a

Christ they must strip themselves of all foolish "worldly" ideas, those the mass of people live for and with, and must step forth into the nakedness of their hearts. Imagine the strain, the superhuman effort of such living! These are, I should think, sports of nature and seldom happy or at any rate easygoing for long. In fact, remembering my conversation with David of several days ago, I appreciate now that this is exactly what David wants to save me from. Once you are in it you've no longer very much to say: you belong to it: did you ever see wood quarrel with its flame? all it can do is burn! What David was actually prescribing was a nice easy society life. Society cannot have much regard for those who are hacking away at its very foundations: dullness or dailyness:

I will be home tomorrow.

IV

FROM BEN BELITT TO THE WEISSES

December 22, 1980

Dear Ted and Renée, ... You can't imagine how *spectral* it has been for me to reread all that carbon correspondence from David with no recollection whatsoever of what I might have been saying to elicit all those responses—like an echo without a living agent to induce it, or an effect with no trace of a correspondingly intimate and particular cause. It has made me feel that the death is mine, rather than David's, since that is where the *absence* lies. I can't summon myself up to lessen or retrieve my non-being, however much I press back on that silence: it is perfectly appalling to me to learn from Judy that nothing pertaining to me has survived as an *aide-memoire* to those years. That is where the poignancy lies: in the vanished particularity ....

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David would often play one record on the victrola over and over again, hours at a time. Or he would rush out into the streets, walking endlessly, a towel wrapped round his forehead for the head pains, the towel still showing visibly under his hat.

FROM HEINRICH SCHULTS (Friend)
TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

August 26, 1941

Dear Judy ... Your letter distressed me dreadfully. Why the devil didn't you tell me before what you and David have been going through? I don't know *what* I could have done, but it might have been something.

A day or so after your letter came my room-mate and I had Mr. Zabel over for dinner .... After dinner I sat out on the back terrace with him for a little while and talked about David. He had heard a little about your troubles. I

am afraid I told him nearly everything in your letter, although I can assure you that I attempted to be everywhere as tactful, saying at once as much, at another as little, as you would have allowed had you specifically commissioned me to talk to him! ... he said that he had noticed David's poetry from the first and thought that David showed an immense talent. He is quite the kind of man, I think, to help along a young poet without ever meeting him simply because he thought he detected talent ....

I should think David, in his present state, should want encouragement to write again, and such encouragement, from a man of Zabel's standing, who moreover sincerely believes in David's talent, I thought might not be unwelcome, especially since the same idea occurred to Zabel .... I simply told him what you had told me of David, added my own impressions, etc .... and then talked about the tragedy of the artist who finds himself in David's position. Neither of us, however, although we don't really know too much about all the circumstances, was pessimistic: we cannot believe David is "written out," since poets like David don't "write out" that quickly. As David readjusts, and maybe as the world too readjusts, and there are new things for one to adhere to, then maybe he will find it not so impossible to work.

Please tell me that I have not done wrong in talking to Mr. Z.

Heinrich

JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

September 7, 1941

Dear Ted Bear—A perfect autumn night, but summer's about gone, damn it .... At the moment, David's in the other room working out the essay for his book. The "advance check" ($25.00), contract and nice note having arrived, at last, from Laughlin during the past week. It's an unbearable weight lifted from our shoulders, I needn't tell you. David's to begin at the Institute, also, regularly, on the 15th, with a much more responsible kind of job, which he asked for. Complete charge of the magazine,

layout, etc ....

Sometimes we do miss you—especially when it's a cool evening and the two of us are here alone. You'd have been interested to see an inspiring letter we got from our friend Heinrich Schults who is doing graduate work at Chicago. I had written a very full letter to him several weeks ago and his answer was overwhelming. Among other things, he told how he'd had Morton Zabel to dinner one night,and finally he and Zabel got away alone and talked—it's the most wonderfully encouraging news David's had in years—the way Zabel spoke of him to Heinrich and it gave us a tremendous lift ....

Did we tell you, or was it after you left, that Herman Greenberg finally got a job in Washington—a very good job, under Leon Henderson ....

The other night David spent a large part of his check taking us to that mysterious looking Borset Roof to dance and drink. From now on, when we see it from our roof, we won't comment. It was ultra refined, with a lot of people who looked as if they never did anything but wash behind the ears.

Judy

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Meanwhile, although Peak had moved to Philadelphia and Ted had married Renée and moved to Florida, we had several new friends and some renewed ones. Herman Greenberg, when a senior at Amherst, had befriended David. Now that he was a lawyer and married, with an infant, we went often to visit them.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

October 4, 1941

Dear Mr. Zabel: I'm quite ashamed that I haven't written to you before—first of all to thank you for recommending me to Yaddo. Secondly, to tell you how much I thought of your article on Conrad which, incidentally, got me to the books, and which I think of as a most remarkably subtle

psychological analysis. I believe it is not too late to tell you this since I had been waiting for a stroke of good news to make my thanks more important. I'm glad to say that my book, *The Simple Scale*, will be out in the *Five Young American Poets*, New Directions, November 10th. I feel a little peculiar, under these conditions, to tell you that I have given your name for reference for a Guggenheim Award. Please do not hesitate to refuse this honor if you feel at all reluctant about it.

Yours very sincerely,
David Schubert

November 1941: Hull Sees Tokyo Envoys Again

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Then Ben Belitt asked David to come up. When he came back from Yaddo, he was in a different state entirely from the way I'd ever known him—it seemed to be some kind of a breaking point. And when he came back from visiting Ben, that was the beginning of the end.

BEN BELITT 1980

And when I ask myself when did we meet ... I get no answers .... Did he even come to visit me in Bennington as these letters suggest he might have?

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

November 8, 1941

Dear Theodore, This is just to prove that I can write and that I love you, although I was beginning to hate you as only I can hate because you didn't love me anymore. Isn't that a good reason? I think that you should be punished for not having written sooner, and so I am only going to tell you the bad news. My ms. was lost. I heard of this only a few days ago. Now don't you feel bad? But really, it is

alright now, in fact I've just got a note from N Directions telling me that proofs are to come by Monday, this is Friday. I hope you've felt bad—and now you don't have to any longer—so that I'll forgive you and tell you some good news—

First of all, Kerker Quinn is a fool, so that if he says your poems are good, you can be sure that they're marvelous! I'm sorry I still got that unforgiving feeling about not hearing from you for so long, so I'll start all over again. Please pay no attention to rejection slips—they are only a memento mori—I just can't be forgiving it seems in this paragraph, so that I'll start all over again. Dear Theodore, It was very good hearing from you. I was glad to hear that you are writing springs of verse and mountains of prose. I bet your short stories are good, your grandfather-in-law sounds like a sheer well of literary suggestion. Renée sounds like a happy home life, and we are glad that everything is turning out fine. We are glad that you passed your French exam too. If you don't answer this letter promptly, I'll murder you!

With love,
David

December 7, 1941: Japanese Attack Pearl Harbor

[I am fired from my job by flames,]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David had a perfect job at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, perfect for writing. But he did not want to work. He wanted money and he wanted to be at home and he wanted to write, and he resented the job right from the beginning. He wanted to quit—he just wanted to write. It wasn't as if he wanted to quit and then quit writing! He wrote all the time. He tended to tear up, rewrite and tear

up things. And what he was writing at that point I thought was incomprehensible. I really couldn't make head or tail of them. He tore these up. But he had no problem *producing*. It was as if that was *all* he wanted to live for.

[big
As angry consciences: I can do
Nothing;]

January 1942: Last Nazi Stronghold in Moscow Sector Falls in 18-Day Drive

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

February 22, 1942

Dear Theodore, you bum, and Dear Renée, you!

Buy the book, I don't have no money, don't have no job, don't have nothin. So you'll have to send an order to New Directions, Norfolk Conn. How is everything with you two? Are you multiplying in knowledge, etc. ETC.? This is just to prove that I can write. When I get a letter from you you will get a letter from me. Yours, tit for tat. To postacard Theodore from Postcard david.

David

[I have not one ability!]
"Midston House"

November 1942: Churchill Tells Italy to Oust Leaders or Face Shattering Allied Air Blows
Russians Break Nazi Don Defense Line

I began to send out David's poems for him, for he was finding the rejection slips more and more depressing. I recall clearly how silently pained (he almost never complained openly; usually his misery was covered up by his humor) he was by Laughlin's off-hand response to his manuscript, *The Simple Scale*, pained to have it brought out within the series of *The Five Young American Poets*, instead of by itself. He considered himself an old and seasoned poet, so that the reviews, or lack of them, were also shattering.

January-June 1942: British Engage Rommel in Africa

KERKER QUINN *Herald Tribune*, March 1942

Five Young American Poets
(Clark Mills, Paul Goodman, Karl Shapiro, David Schubert, Jeanne McGahey.)

David Schubert is ... a specialist in shaping poetry out of the commonplace .... These poems of simple observation are hard to read. The lines are nervous and split with pauses; the general construction is piecemeal; grammatical and logical transitions are often missing or unhelpful and allusions are often private. Readers too lazy to cooperate ... will at any rate take solace from his unusual gift for phrasing. The word combinations are clear, unpatterned, sure of their exact meaning, powerful in their suggestions.

[A ghastly ordeal it was.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Increasingly, David was unwilling to go anywhere. We would have a date with the Greenbergs, and at the last minute he would refuse to make the visit.

[In
Retrospect, I am no longer young.]

May-August 1942: Allied air war. 1000-bomber raid by British on Cologne, next day, Essen, next Bremen.

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

Another reason why success is such a fascinating phantom is its effects on our self-esteem. It is not only by others that we are valued according to the degree of our success; willy-nilly our own self-evaluation follows the same pattern. According to existing ideologies success is due to our own intrinsic merits, or in religious terms, is a visible sign of the grace of God; in reality it is dependent on a number of factors independent of our control—fortuitous circumstances, unscrupulousness and the like. Nevertheless, under the pressure of the existing ideology, even the most normal person is constrained to feel that he amounts to something when successful, and is worthless if he is defeated.

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

May 4, 1942

Dear Mr. Zabel, I found out some time ago that my wife had written to you, at the start of my literary career. It has taken me this time to be able to say how ashamed I am of that knowledge. I fight my own battles.

David Schubert

[Wise, sad, as unhappy as seeing
Someone you love,]

June 10 1942: Lidice Laid Waste by Germans in Reprisal for Assassination of Gestapo Official

[with whom life has
Brought suffering,]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I can't ever recall writing to Zabel early in David's career and I doubt that I did. I did write to Ben Belitt after he accepted a poem of David's for *The Nation*. I wanted to help David (he was so removed and easily discouraged). But we did send the New Directions book to friends and Zabel, of course, was amongst them.

[Unable to speak a word.]

June-September 1942: German Summer Offensive Against Russia

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Then David decided to go to Columbia Library School while at the same time getting himself a small job at the CCNY Library.

July 1942: Sevastopol Falls to Germans after 8-Month Siege

[If when I say this I weep,]

David spoke very little of his past. I knew only that his childhood had been tragic. However, the day David thought he saw his father selling apples on the street corner, David finally confessed one of his great anxieties—that he would end up that way himself.

[I stood there on 42nd Street and
Eighth Avenue. I stood there with two
Nickels.]

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

July 12, 1942

Dear Mr. Zabel, For your kind letter I wish to thank you. I feel ashamed of the acts and thoughts which I have had. Perhaps the trouble with me has been the experience I had years ago, and which I have not gotten over. When I went to Amherst College I was young, and even more foolish than I am today. After my first year, things went badly. I was flunked out. I can't say that I have ever gotten over that. Now I am at the Library School at Columbia, and I am haunted by the thought of the same thing recurring. The library reminds me of Amherst; and I feel in a stupor most of the time.

I wrote the letter which I did, because all these years I felt that I had to prove to myself that I could win out. I felt that, even though some one else did what I might want, it was not a victory until I did it all myself. My wife has been a wonderful person, she is that. But that is how I felt.

I waited months to hear from you, and what I finally began feeling was that you too thought very little of me. I

felt that everything was wrong. In addition, I was without work, and finding it hopeless to get any. I cannot tell you how little I thought of myself. And the terrible experiences, perhaps imaginary, which I felt I was having with people.

I placed the biographical note (which Laughlin wrote from material I sent) because I thought that that was the best way to get over what had happened to me. Instead, everything has come back to be fought over, all over again.

The immediate occasion was not only all this, and the scorn, imaginary or real, which I seemed to feel from people in regard to my work. Someone, whom I had gotten to know, came up to me with a story that Horace Gregory, whom he had seen at a party, was saying that I do not fight my battles alone, that I hide behind my wife, that I am sick, and more things like that. At my job, my boss's last words were, you have to fight for what you want. I felt that it was so unjust, and that I was living in a world only of war, perpetually. As a result of that foolish story, I felt that everybody was simply laughing at me, and that I couldn't stand the deception which I fancied everyone was playing on me. I have delayed writing you this letter because there was something I had to do. As a result of that story about myself which was credited to Gregory, I can't tell you again how badly I felt.

I finally went up to see him. Mr. Gregory convinced me, what I should have already known, that the story was not true. That the person had made it up, I suppose to get even with me, because I would not admire his thought or his talent.

Anyway, I feel that I have made such a fool out of myself, and hurt people that I care about. Although, if I had really cared about them, I suppose I couldn't have done this, as someone said to me recently. I feel confused about my whole life, that it could have brought me to this pass. And I find it hard, just to bear the memory of what seems to me only failures in the past. When you spoke of

my "successes," I was glad, but, well, it seemed to me that there is nothing in my life which I can be completely proud of.

Now I am in the Library School, and I am afraid that the same thing will recur. I am writing this to you, because I want you to know what has happened. It seems almost too hard getting over the past. I keep swinging back to the dreadful things that happened to me in my childhood, in my adolescence, at my job, and with people. I am sorry, because the Library School means almost the only way out for me—I feel as if it is my last chance to make good in the world.

I am ashamed that all I can do is complain about myself. In spite of this, I know that there is a good deal to me, but it is hard getting to it. I tried to use my middle initial at work and the university, to symbolize that those early defeats were really over, but it isn't so simple.

Please don't feel pity at all for me. I can't stand anyone feeling that emotion over me. I suppose I'm too vain for that, just as at times I can't bear it when I feel that anyone cares for me, because I fall so short of what I want to be and do, perhaps because I can't allow myself to feel anything for people too.

I thought of giving up writing, and everything, almost, but I suppose I will never be able to do that. Instead I'll try to get over what has happened; I keep saying to myself, like some stupid child, I'll do my best. I feel, too, as though perhaps I am the one who has been playing the deception, and inventing all the things which have happened to me. Sometimes, I am just aghast at what I say, these days. The effect of learning that that story about myself was, as Horace Gregory said, "a complete fabrication" makes me feel somehow that I must be somehow a fabrication, to have ever been caught up in such affairs.

I have a fellowship at the City College, as well as my Library School work. But I find it so hard integrating, I suppose the word is adjusting, to the one place, then the

other, then the subways, and the people, then what seems to me the remnants of my own life, that I feel almost lost.

Again, I feel shocked at the feelings I myself have, all that apparatus of transference and projection which just makes things worse for me. If only I could get somewhere where I could live a simple, ordered and ordinary life, I think to myself. But, if I can only hold out through the Library School, that is the way to it.

I am glad that you wrote to me. It didn't seem to me that any of the people from whom I expected any interest in my work or myself felt it. I guess that that's all that I can say. More than anything, I felt so badly that I didn't hear from you in regard to my book, for months and months.

Sincerely,
David Schubert

[I went to one on whose
Memory I hardly counted;]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

As a man I suspect that David felt that the world owed him a living (God knows what qualities he took from his father—or even from his mother for that matter). But while we never discussed it, he couldn't have doubted that in my mind his poetry would always come first. Still, he had grown up in a culture where the male was expected to be the bread-winner (which, apparently, his father wasn't); and although he never gave a sign of it, nor did I complain, he may have found it difficult to see me as the only provider.

[my
Friends—did they care?]

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO DAVID SCHUBERT

July 25, 1942

Dear Mr. Schubert, Your letter reached me last week, and I'm glad you wrote as you did, though it is hard for me to answer you with full intelligence or justice. I know that the troubles you describe are real, painful, and taxing of all one's strength and courage; and if I tell you they must be resisted and fought and minimized to the fullest possible degree, it isn't because I'm forgetting one of the wisest counsels ever given us to remember: "We all have strength enough to bear the ills of other people." I hope you don't think of all your difficulties negatively: they have their positive and valuable side, too; no man ever made a true character of himself, or great books, without facing and outfacing his troubles. You have your poetic gift to be proud of, and the fine things it has enabled you to write; you have knowledge which many men are too stupid, or too stupefied by cheap or facile happiness ("disdained by destiny," says Conrad), ever to possess; you have the admiration of those who know you and your work (the others never count for much); you have the loyalty of your wife; you know what it is to be a human being that has some sense of how complex life can be, how much it can hold of ordeal and terror and violence. We can't have these things and know these things, and be happy and successful in common, facile ways as well. And we must make a treasure of our knowledge, let it fight for us, compel it to triumph. It is easier for me to tell you this than for you to take it as a royal road to wisdom; I don't mean that you should; there is no such road. But you must be courageous, and refuse to let past phantoms pursue you. You say there is "nothing in my life which I can be completely proud of." Neither is there in mine, and neither is there in the lives I respect and venerate. Anybody who is completely proud of himself, or of even the fairly passable parts of his work, has no power of growth and insight. But it is also wrong to abuse one's gifts and endurances; and we usually suffer most when we do so.

I do hope urgently that your work at the Columbia Library School will come out well. Try hard, and be sure that it does. I'm sure you'll come through admirably. I know that life in a place like New York can be terribly distracting and exhausting, especially when one's work is divided and scattered over much space. Some day soon you'll find good work to do in a pleasanter community, where life will be easier. I'm terribly sorry I delayed in writing you about your poems—but one form of strength you must show is to remember that other people's lives are also complicated and vexed by work and doubts. I had an extremely crowded winter and spring, was heavily loaded with work and responsibilities as well as by anxieties caused by the war, by family matters, and by my professional entanglements; and my delay signified nothing but great preoccupation with these matters—certainly not any disregard of your book. You must not always imagine the worst things first. I don't intend to "feel pity" for you; I'd much rather respect you by expecting you to show the utmost seriousness about yourself, your work, and your expectations of other people.

Please believe you have my respect and confidence, and admiration. If there is ever anything I can do to help you, let me know, and I'll certainly do it if I can. Don't feel in the least troubled by having written me as you did, in either of these two letters. I respect reality and truth of nature and character, above all things; and I shall admire these in you, in the future, as much as I have in the past, for I know you will have the fortitude to bring them through to success and happiness ....

As ever, sincerely,
Morton D. Zabel

1942: August, Guadalcanal, first major offensive countering Japanese advances.

[—and how could I
Ask them, being if a beggar, proud.]

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO DAVID SCHUBERT

January 20, 1943

Dear David Schubert: I was very pleased to get your Christmas card, though it reminded me that I have neglected too long to write you. Your long letter reached me in California last summer. I answered it then, but didn't send my letter [of July 25, 1942]. Your letter had touched me very sympathetically, and I feared I hadn't answered it any too intelligently. Hesitation bred delay; and delay bred postponement, until I found, on my return to Chicago in September, that I was distractingly involved in a new year's work, in wartime duties and military perplexities, and in a new season's rapidly accumulating problems. It took me three or four months to master the situation, get my work under control, get rid of a heap of writing jobs, and so begin to find time to notice how many civilities I had neglected. You may be sure I read your letter with great feeling for your difficulties, and with a knowledge of how real these have been. But I hope you knew that my interest in you and your work has been genuine, that I have always admired your purposes and your creative talent, and that I shall always hear with interest and sympathy of your new undertakings. I hope your library work has been prospering during this autumn and winter, and that it will develop into a real success. Let me know how everything progresses when you get time to write another letter.

I write you now to ask something. Do you have in hand a book manuscript of your poems? I heard a year or two ago that you had collected your verse together and were looking for a publisher. The publication of poetry is a harder problem than usual these days, and possibly the ms. is still at large. It happens that I am one of a commit-

tee of five who are at present considering manuscripts for a new series of literary works. These editions are being jointly sponsored by Yaddo ... and by Harper and Brothers, who will be the publishers .... I wonder if you would care to submit your book ms. of poems. I cannot promise definite publication; the other members of the committee would have to pass on the ms. also. But I am sure your ms. would get a careful and considerate hearing, and that it would stand better than average chances of appearing eventually in book form. Should you decide to let us see it, don't let expectation run too high; something may always happen to impede our efforts. But two or three members of the committee are already interested in your work, and you know that I am ....

I hope you've been able to continue your writing .... I return your good wishes for 1943, and hope you have a successful year in every way—in your writing, in your studies and work, and in your other life.

As ever, sincerely,
Morton D. Zabel

[How little space there is
Between success and nothing at all.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

The pathos of David's situation every day became more apparent. Often he would call me at school while I was teaching my class to ask my judgment about some poem, or for other reasons. Then I never knew what I would find when I got home. Sometimes a piece of furniture would be gone; at other times the room would be completely rearranged. For David I was wife and mother, loving and caring, but perhaps too intensely so.

[Watching the passersby]

MOLLY WEINERMAN 1980

Perhaps because Judy was older than David, she filled the role of mother, lover, wife, supporter, critic. She provided an orderly life. He needed her so that he could exist. David would wait impatiently for Judy's return from school. He needed her love, her sexuality, her physicality, her security.

[Who fitted in somewhere in what was a Society.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Often David would be at the top of the stairs greeting me with a gruff voice that he seemed to think expressed his manliness.

January 1, 1943: Exactly three months ago Adolf Hitler in a broadcast to the German people spoke of Stalingrad as a city "which we shall take, you may depend on it."

Early today, in a special communiqué, Moscow announced that in three phases of a major offensive before Stalingrad well over 300,000 enemy troops had been killed or captured and twenty-two German and Rumanian divisions had been closed into a trap.

Stalingrad still stands.

[Outcast. Exiled. Penniless.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

One afternoon, on my return from school, upon opening the living room door I saw immediately that all of the book shelves were empty. I could hardly bear it as David told me that he felt he had to give up books altogether; that he had exchanged them for the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica.* I was too terrified to say anything much to him. All I could do was help him keep an even keel. Anything could drive him into a frenzy.

[Never. Never. Never. Never. Never. Never.]

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

These contradictions embedded in our culture are precisely the conflicts which the neurotic struggles to reconcile: his tendencies toward aggressiveness and his tendencies toward yielding; his excessive demands and his fear of never getting anything; his striving toward self-aggrandizement and his feeling of personal helplessness. The difference from the normal is merely quantitative.

January 24, 1943: Tripoli Falls
to the British Eighth Army

FROM DAVID SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

January 24, 1943

Dear Morton Zabel: It is hard for me to write to you, because I feel such conflicting emotions about your letter. I should say, to be more exact, that I find it hard to forgive your past silence; and that I don't know what to do with the emotion of the past. I had decided, however, that life isn't worth living unless one can trust others.

How happy and sad and hateful and angry then I feel. Yet I am trying to trust your friendship, please don't be offended at this.

I have a new book which I will send you as soon as I have it typed. If you think it worthy of publication, and the rest of the committee approves, naturally I'd feel good. My reason is that if the book doesn't do anybody harm, it might do me some good—at least to the extent of academic advancement, i.e., nearer to trees and countryside and people I'd like to know. Since this ms. completes the collection published some time ago—it might be a good idea, do you think it wise? to publish them together. Let me know about this, although it's very much a matter of the future, anyway, so that there's no rush about it. Meanwhile I'll send the ms. out to you.

Oh yes, there's another reason for wanting the ms. out. It gets rid of itself that way and leaves me free for the book I really want to write but couldn't, a sort of Vita Nuova, strictly poetry.

I'm busy at Library School where I'm learning "what the best songs are made of," as my wife says, paraphrasing when I was a student in Cadiz. At work, as College Librarian (not anything except a fellowship), I work. Weekends I complain, groan, and act in general like the most detestable, odious creature in the whole world.

Again, I can't say how much your letter means to me, because I don't know yet. I'm not talking about publication but about my emotions. Anyway, I am devoted and the same (more or less).

Sincerely,
David Schubert

[Shall I stand spellbound by the
Reiteration's disaster?]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

In January there was a letter from the draft board which greatly upset us.

KAREN HORNEY *The Neurotic Personality*

While the normal person is able to cope with the difficulties without damage to his personality, in the neurotic all the conflicts are intensified to a degree that makes any satisfactory solution impossible.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

The end came on a white January night, 1943. Having had to let our weekly, half-day cleaning woman go, I would do the odd chores at such times as I had free; this evening I had the leisure, so with a damp cloth I proceeded to wipe the baseboard. Suddenly, and completely out of character, David came in from his bedroom table where he had been working, grabbed the cloth from me and most vigorously, but silently for a few moments, pursued the job. Then without a word he returned to his desk. With confused feelings I continued, when suddenly he exploded. Opening the two bedroom windows—one faces west, the other south, using the gruff voice, he shouted curses about his "whore" of a wife, using every epithet imaginable in describing me. It was late now, and with the silent, snow-covered world outside, I kept thinking he would be disturbing the neighbors. But when I tried to soothe and calm him he simply became more agitated; among other things, he grabbed the hand-carved framed looking glass above an antique Victorian chest of drawers (he had purchased it proudly for five dollars), and flung it out of the window. In stunned silence now I watched as the big snow flakes drifted into the open frame, each drop melting silently as it settled on the edge of David's table. Now he picked up the shears lying there, waved them above my head, shouting, "Get out of here or I'll kill you." Moving to the closet, I reached for my good shoes (none of us had more than two pairs in those days), but David, snatching them away, threw them out of the open pane, into the snowy silence. There was a very wide expanse of red tiled roof under that window, and perhaps as late as April, after the snow was gone, to my

amazement, standing upright on the sun-lit tiles, stood my shoes. I crawled out to rescue them, wondering how they could have remained in such perfect condition while we mortals—David and I—were falling apart.

Shivering I rushed to the small hotel about a half-block away, and telephoned Dr. Sperling, begging him to return to the apartment with me the next morning.

Bedlam was what we found; both windows were still open, the bed unslept in, torn pieces of David's manuscript lying about the floor, two oil paintings of me ripped out of their frames, were cut and scattered about, and things from drawers and closets were strewn everywhere. David was gone—and I felt, for the first time, relieved. Sperling left—we hoped David would be in touch with him, if not with me. I called my school. The Director, an understanding woman, who did not think, as some others did, that David's problem was my spoiling of him, suggested that I take a couple of days off. In utter exhaustion I immediately set about gathering together the fragments of David's poems.

[No! What is
Over is over.]

"No Title"

V

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

February 4, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, I have been reluctant to write to you but I feel now that I must. Have you heard from David at all since the letter you received about 10 days ago? He has disappeared. He left here Wednesday morning—a week ago yesterday—after a terrible break down the night before. I did not learn until later that he went directly to see Dr. Goodrich—head of the library at City College—and who has been very kind to him—Goodrich said he was in a "serious condition"—but from that point on we have not been able to trace him. He wore very few clothes and as far as I can gather, left all means of identification here. The only thing he may have on him is your letter. Also he had $10.

I think it was his attempt to gather the ms. together which was the direct cause. He has had many relapses, but has worked through each one a little better each time. This last year, since he has been in the library, he has made a terrific attempt to adjust to the life about him. Your letter, I think, reopened the most terrible wound of all—one never properly healed.

I saw how he kept postponing the retyping of the ms.—so unlike him—for here was the one chance he had wanted all his life. Finally he wanted to send the ms. as it was (much deleted) but my stupid interference—

I think he was losing confidence in his poetry—and the fear that this new venture would not go through was more than he could bear. Poetry is his life. Partly because he couldn't, partly because he wouldn't, he has been unable to fit himself into the pattern necessary to our kind of living. (His abilities are far more than average.) The failure of his book to achieve any success—and no one came forward at any time with the praise he needed—was the last straw. And how he loathed that biography—for

which I am more than half responsible.

We have seen terrible times together, but no one knows better than I what a rare and wonderful person he truly is—and I know his weaknesses. In fact, it is the qualities in him which I most deeply respect and admire that have made it so hard for him to get along.

How he suffered over that ms.—each retyping meant revision. Each poem began to look as if it should come out. Now it lies in shreds on my desk—gathered up as best I could.

This is what I want to ask you—Mr. Schubert will never know, so you can refuse if you feel it cannot be done. I expect it can't, so don't let it trouble you too much.

Is there any possibility that this new plan would republish his New Directions volume? Or could I send you some poems I have out in the mail and you could add them to the book? I don't know that they were his best. I was trying to retype the poems gradually and get them out to the magazines. I must have about 10 poems at least. We decided I should handle that end. *The Yale Review* will soon publish a very fine little poem—and *Poetry* has a magnificent one, I think, to appear soon. We decided to send there finally, because we thought it no longer mattered.

I guess I'm foolish—imagining him wandering down the street some time from now and seeing his new book or a notice of it. In spite of his attempt to be casual when he wrote to you, *nothing* else matters to him. At the same time I will understand if you can't do it—and as I said before he'll never know. Anyway he may be dead somewhere or out of his mind completely. The detective at the police station checked the hospitals but so far no one has answered to his description. We don't dare make it public for fear of further retreat on his part.

I know you will keep this confidential. I don't care for myself but for him. If he is going to be all right and can get along without me *that* may be best. For while this house offered him a stronghold in some respects it increased his

conflicts. And I have made many mistakes.

Judith Schubert

February 6, 1943: General Eisenhower Appointed Commander in Chief of All Allied Forces in North Africa

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

February 6, 1943

Dear Mrs. Schubert: Your two letters reached me this morning. I need not say how distressing your news was. I had written a short note to your husband last night and was about to mail it this morning, but am instead withholding it from the mail. It was just a brief word to say that he should get his manuscript together as soon and as conviently as possible, so that the reading of it by the members of the committee could begin.

I have, of course, heard nothing of Mr. Schubert. I hope greatly that word of him has reached you by this time. I know how desperately anxious you must be. And I can imagine, too, how difficult things have been for you in the past, and how courageously you have dealt with them; how great a support you have been to him in his troubles. I hoped that by suggesting this possibility of book-publication to him some encouragement might be given, though I was mindful of the accompanying strain of hope and suspense, and of the possibility of final disappointment—for there is always a chance that plans may not succeed: I could not definitely promise publication, though I know the ms. will be given the most careful consideration and everything possible will be done on its behalf ....

I am prompted to ask if David has ever consulted a good doctor about his troubles. Not any common doctor, but a good, solid, considerate man skilled in psychic troubles .... Sometime ago I arranged that he go to Yaddo for a period of rest and writing; but he stayed only a day or two.

And his letters this past year show that he has been, if anything, worse off than before, despite the promise of better things held out by his new library work. If he returns to you, you simply *must* see that he gets the right care and advice from a sound psychiatrist. It may be a long and painful process to go through, but it seems to me the only sensible one. Otherwise his affliction and suffering will continue to grow worse ....

Perhaps I should not have written to him about the possibility of a book: it may have precipitated this crisis. Naturally I thought it would be encouraging to him. I delayed in answering his letter to me last summer when I was in California (though I did write a letter which I never mailed) because I feared I would be disturbing him by not saying the right thing. It is hard to answer his letters with the precise sympathy they require, though my interest in his work is sincere, and has been ever since he first submitted it to me at the magazine eight or ten years ago. I have never met your husband, as you know; the only common friend we have had is Ben Belitt, of Bennington College. I would write to him now to see if he could be of any help to you, but I heard he had left his teaching position for the army, and so I would not know where to reach him.

You must let me know whatever news you have within the next few days. I am deeply sorry for the way things have happened, and hope intensely that everything will turn out all right.

Sincerely,
Morton D. Zabel

FROM BOARD OF PUBLIC WELFARE
TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

February 5, 1943

Dear Mrs. Schubert: On January 27 your husband was admitted to our hospital for mental observation. The Doctors feel that he may be in need of further hospitalization, and he is scheduled to be given a hearing .... If you or any member of the family can arrange to be present, we

should be very glad to have you come. If not, rest assured that Mr. Schubert will be extended every consideration, and you will be notified of the findings ....

Very truly yours,
BOARD OF PUBLIC WELFARE
Washington, D.C.

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

Saturday late night

Dear Mr. Zabel—I have just received word from a hospital in Washington that David is there. I am leaving on the first train I can get. He is evidently very unwell.

Judith Schubert

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

February 10, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, Thank you for your wonderful letter. I feel under much better control again now, though I do not know how I lived through it all. Fortunately, David has a very devoted friend in Washington (Herman Greenberg went to Amherst when David did) and he is doing everything he can for David.

David went to Washington "to see Archibald MacLeish and get into the Navy." When I saw him in that terrible, terrible place—a state hospital—the reception center—he was so sweet—so much like the young boy I first met that it broke my heart. He got into some trouble at the bus station, and the police picked him up. He was in that hospital since January 27—the day he left NYC.

I am very discouraged and depressed by what they said—but they don't know too much about him yet—and I am not going to tell you of the hospital findings until everything is more definite.

The years before David finished C.C.N.Y. (which he hated) were our best. It was always the thought of getting a job which he rejected. His difficulties when he was working at the Brooklyn Institute became more and more apparent to me. In a sense, that first breakdown was the

worst, for it was so *inward.* David has always been deeply interested in the whole field of psychiatry—as was I. After reading Dr. Karen Horney's first book, I went to consult with her in 1939. She saw David then. She described him to me as "extraordinarily brilliant and gifted"—which I've always belived. She recommended immediate treatment. From that point on he has been under the care of an analyst. Though I doubted his Doctor at various times, he seemed, on the whole, quite good. (A refugee—worked with Freud in Vienna) We could not afford the Doctors we might have chosen—as it was, we have always been under a tremendous financial strain.

David quit the Doctor several times. In fact David did not see him since August of this year. Mr. Crawford—a man who has known David since he was at Amherst—thought, perhaps, he should be sent to Bloomingdale's then. (Do you know of this hospital?) I think now that was the mistake. He needed complete rest and relaxation away from all his conflicts and responsibilities. But I suppose I could not face his going away. And the Doctor insisted he could work through his illness while he was home—otherwise I would not have taken it upon myself to keep him out of the hospital. In Washington, the Doctor said Bloomingdale's would be a wonderful place for David ....

I *may* need help in getting recommendations from literary people. Mr. Zabel—I pray that you will help me if I do. I hope I won't need to bother you, but I *must* do everything I can to help David. It seems that Bloomingdale's is a most expensive place. The job is to get him in there free of charge ....

During the last two years, David's illness has taken a more outward form. And while it made it more difficult for others, I felt it was better that way.

About the ms. I will get it to you by Monday—sooner if possible except that I have so much to do—and my own job to get back to.

I do not have any of David's old mss. There is only

what is in the New Directions Book. I know you have that copy. (David tore up so many many wonderful poems through those years. And he did a novel which we thought was magnificent. This too he tore up, finally.) I have only got the 21 poems I had hidden and I will get copies of the 2 to be printed. All the editorial attention—eliminations, etc. I leave up to you. If the book could appear, it would be wonderful. If it cannot, I will understand. While I love poetry, my feelings for it are mainly intuitive. (I am poorly educated.)

Again, how much your interest means to us.

Judith Schubert

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

February 22, 1943

Dear Mrs. Schubert: ... I need not say how glad I was to hear that you had found your husband. I know what an intense anguish and suspense you must have been in, and felt most deeply sympathetic with you. These are terrible and costly experiences, yet we always are willing to go through them for those we love. I am also greatly relieved to hear that something systematic is being attempted for David. I hope the psychiatrists you are now consulting will do something positive and beneficial. I think a real and if necessary prolonged treatment in a sanitarium is the very best thing, and I hope you'll get the right doctors to help you put this through. Yes, Bloomingdale Sanitarium, up at White Plains, is the best thing of this kind around New York—indeed one of the best in the country. I know it is very expensive, but I have also heard that they make provisions for deserving and talented people who are rightly recommended, and that then the expense is greatly reduced. (I have known of several people who have had treatment there; several notable literary people have gone there in periods of crisis or illness, as you probably know.) Of course I'll be glad to write any letter you may need that might help David get in there; you'll have to have others too, so you had better get in line with people who can give

them ....

I shall wait until I get *all* the manuscripts from you before I assemble the poems and begin to pass them around to other members of the Committee. I think they will all have to be retyped to make proper showing to these readers and to the publishing house. Perhaps I can get someone to do it; I am too busy to do it myself ....

With every good wish, sincerely,
Morton D. Zabel

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

Wednesday, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, Thank you for your good, kind letter .... I know I must prepare myself for the possibility of the book's being rejected. And I *will* gain strength for the occasion if it arises. There have been some very terrible hours since last week. I suppose my mind has at last unfolded to the uncertainty of David's future—my own—the readjustment meanwhile—and conflicts which have lain dormant for more years than I care to think about ....

If it seems Bloomingdale's *would* be the proper place, then I will work on it. It is hard for me to believe David is as ill as reports indicate, even while I have been in close feeling with his long intense suffering. I am a little aware, also, of the possibilities existent in such illnesses. Even so, I find it hard to believe ....

In any case, for one who has been so successful—and for one who is so busy—to take as much interest and devote the time you have—and so sympathetically—I cannot convey what is in my heart to you. It helps me enormously, but far more important, when David finds out, it will help him. That is what matters ....

Very gratefully
Judith Schubert

1943: Russian Counteroffensive

FROM M.D. ZABEL
TO THE DIRECTOR, BLOOMINGDALE HOSPITAL

1943

Dear Sir: I have been informed of the serious illness of Mr. David Schubert and of the hope which his wife and friends have that he may be admitted to Bloomingdale Hospital for the care which he needs. I would like to speak to you very urgently on his behalf.

Mr. Schubert is one of the most talented of the younger American Poets. I have been interested in his work for eight or ten years—ever since he first submitted it to *Poetry:* A MAGAZINE OF VERSE when I was an editor there. From the beginning it struck me as exceptionally sensitive and deserving work—a poetry written out of intense personal sincerity and insight, and showing real originality and fineness of craftsmanship .... In 1936 he won *Poetry*'s Young Poets Prize of $100, and he has had critical recognition from other quarters. Two years ago his work appeared in the *Five Younger Poets* volume published by New Directions, and many critics noted it as among the best work which that annual collection has printed. At present I am taking a special interest in seeing that a volume of Mr. Schubert's poetry is published by one of the foremost American publishers .... In any case, Mr. Schubert is a poet of remarkable qualities—sensitiveness, honesty, keen personal values, a sharp awareness of his world and its problems—and he has wrought it out of the conflicts and difficulties that beset all of us in these times. It is tragic that these conflicts have struck him in a particularly cruel and ruthless way, and precipitated the illness from which he now suffers .... I hope, very urgently, that you will find it possible to extend the privileges and facilities of Bloomingdale to Mr. Schubert .... He is a writer of genuine gifts and admirable purposes. His work is valuable to American literature. You would be helping a very deserving man and artist.

Sincerely yours,
Morton D. Zabel

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

March 8, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, Friday there was a letter in the box from David. It is the first word I have had from him since I returned from Washington several weeks ago. At that time he seemed very sensible, though he did say a couple of fantastic things. (Did I know they were watching his ms., for example) Gallinger Hospital, the receiving center he was in at that time, frightened the life out of me. Peak and I felt doubtful about their diagnosis—for to be so certain in this field, knowing so little about David, and after such a short time!

Dr. Sperling—the analyst who has cared for David since 1939—remained very optimistic in spite of the Gallinger Doctors. Nevertheless, as the days wore on here, I felt more and more hopeless about it ....

After I returned from Washington, I sent David several letters. He never answered these (not unusual even in normal times for he always hated writing letters). I began to feel he was not well enough to write.

The letter he wrote Friday gives me much hope. There is much reference to the past in it—all right and clear. He is worried about me—my adjustment alone, speaks of the future together, and refers to this period as "a vacation from life the way Peak said years ago." The letter is full of love.

I am sure David is very ill and needs to be hospitalized for a long period, but this no longer seems so important. I don't know exactly why the letter helped me so much, but my path lies clear ahead again. I cannot say how dark and terrible these last weeks have been ....

Very sincerely,

Judith Schubert

P.S. Have just returned from work to find another letter from David. It sounds as encouraging as the first ....

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

March 24, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, David was transferred to Kings County last Thursday .... In order to get David to Bloomingdale's free of charge, or almost that, (I make $1400 a year) I would have to have some help from some literary people .... I thought I'd call Eda Lou Walton who is a close friend of Ben Belitt's to find out if Ben is anywhere near here. I thought he might help me. I never got around to getting Ben's address for Miss Walton guessed I was in trouble. She volunteered, without any hesitation, to go with me Saturday. She also called Louise Bogan and Miss Bogan said she knew a Dr. at Bloomingdale and could write to see what are the proper steps. I called Peak Crawford, a friend of ours in Philiadelphia—he seems to have some connections in the field and feels certain he can help ....

I have seen David 3 times. He has seemed perfectly sound in his mind every time—but he is a schizophrenic case. The doctors said they feel pretty sure he will get well ....

When I saw David yesterday (Tuesday) he asked me to bring his pen, and a notebook. Monday he asked me to bring a picture of myself. Saturday I brought him some magazines which he is reading. He had no delusions any of those 3 times I was there. He looked "distant" often, but when I would stop talking, he would say "please continue. I'm listening." (He used to meditate in this way long ago and I always thought it natural for him.) He takes many notes (observations) just as he always did. He asks always when he can go home.

Judith Schubert

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

March 27, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, David will be moved to Bloomingdale's next Tuesday .... Everybody is being so kind. Dr. Hale, the one in charge of David, has been so wonderful that I can hardly bear it.

These last 3 days David has been in very poor condition. I understand that it must be expected. It's as if he were in a nightmare part of the time.

Judith Schubert

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Dr. Hale suggested that I meet with him after visiting with David. "Don't hesitate to call on me if you need help,"—a very comforting message in view of my shattering visits. This extraordinary interest was marvelously consoling.

FROM LOUISE BOGAN TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

March 3, 1943

Dear Mrs. Schubert, I am so glad that your husband will have treatment at White Plains ....

Your husband is sure to get well, since he wants to get well. Believe me, he will be better than ever before: able to cope with his life and get his work done and listened to. Remember this fact in the months ahead, whenever things seem stalled or to have back-fired. Have a great deal of patience, and trust life.

Sincerely yours,
Louise Bogan

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David, affectionate and clinging, would show me the poems he was writing, done in strange hieroglyphs.

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

March 28, 1943

Dear Mrs. Schubert: Your letter came two days ago. It was good to hear that some progress has been made ....

Yes, I know Miss Bogan very well, and I am sure she will do all she can to help you. She is greatly understanding and sympathetic in these matters, besides being a poet who would take an interest in your husband's case as that of a man of gifts and unusual talent; I know that no appeal

made to her would be in vain .... You will probably also need to get some letters from other literary people .... From everything I have heard or know about the place, it is by all means the place for your husband to go to. However long his cure will take, you will know that he is in the best possible hands ....

I have the ms. of David's book just about finished; am assembling, arranging, and doing certain necessary editing of the poems .... I shall call the book *Lighthouse Mission,* as you suggest .... Perhaps, if everything comes along all right, we can show the assembled ms. to David sometime in the late spring or early summer .... Don't lose patience or courage. The treatment may take a considerable time, but I'm sure your husband is now on the right track.

Sincerely,
Morton D. Zabel

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO NEWTON (Co-editor)

March 9, 1943

Dear Newton: ... I must now tell you about David Schubert's ms., but I must ask you to keep wholly confidential what follows .... I wrote to Schubert in January, and soon got an answer saying he was very grateful for my (our) interest and that he would apply himself to assembling his poems .... About two weeks later I got a deeply distressed letter from his wife: David had disappeared and hadn't been heard from in a week .... The assembling, correction, and planning of his ms. had brought on a nervous crisis and he had gone to pieces under the strain. This, of course, had been preceded by a long history of nervous illness. (I have not been in touch with him closely for quite a while, but we have been intermittent correspondents for eight or more years—ever since my first editorial interest in his work ....) I've met various people who have known him, and all spoke of his fineness and sensitiveness as a person; and I myself have stood up for his poetry, which I think very sensitive and beautiful at its best; but he is one of the luckless who've had their worst troubles inside

themselves, though in this case the troubles were outside too .... A week later Mrs. S. wrote me again. S. had been found in Washington, in a public hospital .... The Schuberts have no money; Mrs. S. has been his great support .... S. had entered the Columbia Library School, meanwhile doing library work at C.C.N.Y. Poor Mrs. S. is in terrible anxiety and anguish, of couse, wholly devoted to him as ever. So matters stand.

Meanwhile she has gathered up all the poetic mss. she could find and sent them to me .... I hope to send the collection on to you soon. Now the question is this: I think enough of his work to urge very strongly its publication. I have told Mrs. S. that I could not guarantee publication, but I know the rejection of the ms. will be terribly hard on the poor woman, and of course on David when ultimately he hears about it .... So I do hope you'll give your best hand to the poems and urge their publication with whomever on the committee you get in touch with, and ultimately with Harpers. I don't like to use special pleading of this kind; but I wouldn't do so unless I had not already admired and supported the poems themselves ....

All good wishes, as ever,
Morton D. Zabel

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

March 31, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, I cannot say anything about your letters for David (and for me) that would tell you what I feel. They make me weep deep down inside ....

What worries me is that Dr. Wall said they couldn't keep David if it is a long drawn out case—as I think it *will* be .... Miss Bogan said not to worry about it—that that statement is their protection in case they find he is incurable. In any case, I think your fine letter (it is a most wonderful letter) will be a great help ....

That everyone is being so good and kind to me (and David, of course) almost bewilders me ....

Gradually, now, I guess I'll be able to relax. I am a

wreck; though it is selfish of me to mention myself .... Visiting David almost every day at Kings County,—(his state was very bad the last 4 or 5 days) it is something I cannot ever describe ....

Many many years ago, through your writing, and through other channels, David and I felt you were a wonderful person. I never dreamed then that your generosity would turn in our direction in such a way as this. Thanking you is so inadequate. I feel foolish trying to ....

Yours very Sincerely,
Judith Schubert

April 21, 1943: Nazis Drop Bombs in 2 London Areas
Heavy Defense Fire Harries the Few Enemy Planes
R.A.F. over Reich Again.

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

May 3, 1943

Dear Mr. Zabel, Yesterday I saw David .... He looked better than I've seen him look in years—as if he'd gained 10 pounds. He still seemed confused and has many ideas of persecution, but he was relaxed. The Doctors are hopeful.

He'd had 3 electric shock treatments. They had helped him, but he got a fractured hip as a result (there are always accompanying dangers) and they had to be discontinued. The Doctor said they might try them again in 6 weeks.

David asked about you, and all about the ms.—if anything could still be done. (His memory is excellent.) I said you had written some wonderful letters, but did not say much about the book. Though I was vague he did not press me.

I hope you are well. Wouldn't it be nice if Spring would come.

Sincerely,
Judith Schubert

April 1943: U.S. First Army Joins British Eighth in Encircling Axis Forces in Tunisia
May: End of the African Campaign
250,000 Axis Troops Surrender

FROM BEN BELITT TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

Camp Gordon, Ga.
May 7, 1943

Dear Judy, I was glad to have your note, with encouraging word of David. I wrote him, as you suggested, taking the chance of an occasional remark which would carry both my own intonations and the weight of our mutual interests. I had to assume that an entirely perfunctory letter would not do, that he really wished to hear from *me*. I hope that was right .... Eda Lou [Walton] has kept me informed as to David's progress and will continue to pass on to me any news that she has from you. I can't begin to tell you of my anxiety and concern; but you must believe, as I do, in the essentially indestructible *health* of David's spirit, out of his own resources, at the same time that others are making those resources available to him from without. I do look forward to his full recovery—not merely wishfully, but out of my belief in David's reality, in the skill of those now caring for him, and in your own fine patience and courage.

Let me know whenever I can be of use.

Ben Belitt

July 17, 1943: Invasion of Sicily

FROM M.D. ZABEL TO BLOOMINGDALE

July 16, 1943

Dear Dr. Wall: Last winter it came my way to put Mr. Schubert's manuscript of poems before a New York publisher, with the fairly certain chance that they would be published ....

If you could tell me how soon you think Mr. Schubert will be able to assume the responsibility of arranging his work in final form, I will be very grateful ....

Sincerely yours,
Morton D. Zabel

July 25, 1943: Mussolini and Cabinet Resign

PEAK CRAWFORD 1980

David had a large, bright room at Bloomingdale. He looked well. I was comfortable with him. But he seemed to have withdrawn, detached himself from life.

July 29, 1943: Tide Turns Against Germans in Russia

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

By coincidence I was introduced to the man who had bought some of the books David had gotten rid of. The gentleman offered to return them. I asked for only one book—Emily Dickinson's *Collected Poems*, "Because David gave it to me." When I opened the book, in my handwriting I found, "To David, with all my love."

MOLLY WEINERMAN 1980

I went to visit David at Bloomingdale with Judy. I remember now the great sadness and the quiet. We rode back on the train in silence.

November 1943: R.A.F.
Smashes Poison Gas Plants
Russians Beat Off Nazi Attacks

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

David's work in *Poetry* appeared for the last time in July 1943, with "Dissertation on the Detroit Free Press." David's name was not included on the cover.

March 22, 1944: German
Forces Occupy Hungary
June 4: Rome Is Liberated by
U.S. Fifth Army

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

[1944]

Dear Ted—Just got your letter. Am in school—will write more lengthily later. Yes—write to D. at once. You can mention that I dropped a card sending his address—but you don't even need to tell him that—nor mention anything about his being in the hospital unless it's "How are you feeling now?" *If* he asks you, then you can say I had told you. Anyway *do* write to him—about inviting him—you can say how much you'd like him there but tell him your circumstances just as you told me .... Do tell him about your own activity and invite him to contribute—mention his poem in *Poetry*. Don't ask him about me or our relationship now. Just go by what he wants to tell you.

My love,
Judy

August 1944: Liberation of
France, Belgium, and Luxembourg

August 21: Dumbarton Oaks Conference discussed draft of a charter for permanent postwar international organization to maintain world peace and security.

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

After about a year at Bloomingdale's, I was notified that the prognosis for David's future was not good, and he was to be transferred out. Feeling unable to have him at home again, in desperation I turned to Dr. Wortis; he arranged for David's transfer to Central Islip.

September 1944: Battle for Germany Begins
October: Philippines Campaign: Islands retaken in last and greatest naval engagement of the war resulting in a decisive defeat for the Japanese

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

Meanwhile, I was writing David as lovingly as I could, bringing him things on my visits that his letters—when they were coherent—occasionally asked for; but my going to see him was becoming increasingly less regular. I began to see another man; I was trying to make a life separated from David. In my desertion of David, I was doing the only thing I could. It is no exaggeration to say that it was a matter of my very life. I have never rid myself wholly of that guilt; however I have learned to live with it. But to live excluding David who was such an integral part of me, to disregard all of his needs, was self-punishing; and for all of my surface equilibrium, the constant pangs of guilt caused me the suffering of a damned soul.

Sometime within the year after that, this second hospital wanted David to leave. David's sister, Dorothy, now entered the picture. She was a hard-working, conscientious woman, always worried about David's welfare. During our marriage we saw very little of her. And the much younger brother, who came once to see us, we almost never saw. She took David to her home, although Peak and I felt that she should have insisted that Central Islip keep him.

[My sister, who accompanied me
...
What about her? ...]

FROM PEAK CRAWFORD TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

November 28, 1944

Dear Judy, I am worried about D.'s leaving the hospital. I don't understand why the doctors permitted it. If you recall, I wrote you, after learning that D. was going to Central Islip, that it would be the quickest route out of the hospital for D., since the doctors practically shove the patients out of there. But I didn't like the prospect, and I never expected them to release him so soon. What did they say to you? It is not long since you were told at Bloomingdale that D. "wouldn't last 24 hours outside." Perhaps that was an exaggeration, but when I saw D. he was in no condition to be outside .... I repeat that I think the doctors at Central Islip made a bad mistake. I do not see how D. can be happy under the circumstances. Nothing will be done for him, he has been separated from his friends and the burden of recovery has been placed squarely on his own shoulders. Frankly, I dread the results ....

I am glad you have found a good doctor to talk with. I am glad it is a woman, and I hope you will find quietness of mind. You deserve it, after the long struggle and heavy responsibility. If D. tries to see you, as I am sure he will

eventually, be kind and firm. Point out to him that his best chance of happiness right now is under an entire change of environment and circumstances—such as Dorothy's home will provide. I think that is so. And it's our best hope for D., now that he's out. Damn those doctors.

I am writing D. Please let me know if Dorothy reports on his progress.

Best love from
Peak

[And I ride with her now, in the subway,
Wanting somehow to do something
For my omission.]

DOROTHY LETWIN 1980

Actually David was not under my care. I was always actively interested in his welfare, and did visit him at the hospital. It was heartbreaking to see him fading away.

[It is to my eternal
Discredit that, just as years gone by,
I cannot communicate with her, can't
Think of a single thing to tell her.]

"The Transformation"

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

After his release, he was again picked up—this time in a subway corridor where he was gesticulating and talking to himself. Shortly thereafter David was back at Central Islip.

December 16-26, 1944: Battle of the Bulge: German Counter-offensive Finally Checked, at Cost of 77,000 U.S. Casualties.

David did not, it seems, write to me. It had always been Judy who did the writing. But Judy may have been so embroiled in her own turmoiled concern for David that it's possible she didn't write; the fact remains that no letters have survived our many changes of location during that time. Renée and I had moved from Florida in 1941 where we were living with her grandparents, to my first teaching job in Maryland, then to North Carolina, and, finally, by the fall of 1944, we wound up in Connecticut.

At the University of North Carolina, the year before, I had joined Warren Carrier on the staff of QRL, which he was founding. But by the time the year was over, Warren had joined the Foreign Ambulance Corps and so QRL was left with Renée and me. Now that we were at Yale, and closer to New York, evidently I tried again to get in touch with Judy.

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

December 26, 1944

Dear Ted, I meant to answer long before this .... I'm sorry, too, that I couldn't make our last appointment ....

As you undoubtedly suspect—in order for me to have gone on—to go on at all—I've had to create an entirely new life for myself. The new job coming when it did, was a god send.

The thought of seeing any of our old friends has been impossible until recently. I couldn't have reached this point without regular psychiatric treatment. But anyone standing outside watching me would judge very harshly. Especially since I now contemplate Reno this summer. But you won't believe that I don't always love David—and you're nearer the truth ....

Judy

February 4, 1945: Germany Crushed. Yalta Conference attended by Roosevelt, Church-

ill, and Stalin and advisors. Secret agreements made in exchange for Russia's entry into Far East war.

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

... I'm not going to Reno—feel happier that I won't be going through that....

April 12, 1945: Death of Roosevelt.
April 28: Mussolini and Mistress Killed by Italian Partisans.
May-June: German Capitulation; V-E Day.
August 6: Fireball over Hiroshima Kills 70,000; over Nagasaki Incinerates 40,000.

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

November 27, 1945

Dear Judy, I feel constrained to write you once more about what we a long time ago talked over—the poetry you have, David's and your own.

As you know, I have somewhat (ridiculously and arrogantly I guess) blamed myself for what happened. If I had at least been present to do what I could ....

And as I read David's work and realise how vastly superior he is to many a poet collecting considerable reputations these days .... We want to do something: if you had several poems of David's we would feature them and accompany them with a little article pointing out his unique flavor .... I hope you will help me .... With our mag growing (now into its second volume), we can insure ... David pretty able company: Stevens, Williams, Kafka, Cummings ....

Ted

P.S. Please send me David's address ... I want to write to him and send copies of the mag, if you approve.

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

November 30, 1945

Dear Ted, Your letter interested me, excited me, for David's sake, and makes me slightly fearful. For I am afraid of being involved all over again. The struggle to free myself from David and readjust to a new life has been terrific .... Nevertheless, I feel free enough and objective ... to go ahead with you .... I'll send you what I have (and some of my own poems).

Piecing his poems together took many hours, but many of his best poems were beyond repair .... I'll leave it to your judgment whether there is enough ....

When David needed help most, aside from my faith, and I know he had a superb talent, he was alone. Largely, I suppose, because all of his friends had their own struggles and the competition creates such a striking jealousy. However, I would never blame his failure (or success) on his friends.

David's address is Central Islip. You may be taking on a great responsibility in writing to him .... Do send him copies of QRL ... with an affectionate note. If he is at all rational you must know how to interpret his letters .... People ill as he is can sound deceptively well. He might ask you to come to his rescue ....

J

November 1945: Twelve Nazi War Criminals Brought to Trial and Sentenced to Hang

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

December 5, 1945

Dear Ted: I read your letter several times ... I've just gone over David's poems. You may imagine how painful a

procedure for me that is .... Zabel had the whole ms. retyped, but the venture fell through. Until today the ms. has been in the original wrappings it was returned in.

Somehow, I'm glad to place D's ms. in your hands. Your interest and concern in him make me happy. I wish he'd more of it in the years before his collapse—yet he rejected several gestures, and hardly encouraged anyone. He was too deeply disappointed, hurt and finally bitter, though his saintly heart permitted no overt action to relieve his misery. His early childhood was too damaging. At the same time he was spoiled. He'd planned on an early success—to that end he sacrificed the rest of his numerous capabilities.

My love to you both,
Judith

FROM THEODORE WEISS TO JUDITH SCHUBERT

December 14, 1945

Dear Judy, I had hardly suspected that David had turned out (especially since, as you say, these are less than half of his new poems) so much. What astonishes me ... is the sharp simplicity (and consequent profundity) he attained: a forthrightness and a terrible clarity, a definition of the void .... Isn't it surprising that with an ability to write of this condition so cleanly—an indication of comprehension and therefore some control—David could not write himself through it? ...

—Ted and Renée

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO THEODORE WEISS

December 21, 1945

Ted dear, ... It seems to me now that your note strikes at about the right time. I seem ready to try again ... but with a difference in mind. We will do all we can to make David well (for the first time I am not alone!! You are with me!!) but for an entirely new life. One without me. Nothing will ever convince me that I can help him better as a wife—in fact, quite the opposite ....

Judy

PEAK CRAWFORD 1980

I visited him at the end at Central Islip. You could see he wasn't responding. I thought he had lost the will to live.

[When you cannot go further]

Do you know how I define evil? It's undeserved suffering. David's life was full of undeserved suffering.

[It is time to go back]

THEODORE WEISS 1980

I sent a Christmas gift and later I sent some magazines and cigarettes. There was no reply to my notes.

March 24, 1946, I received a desperate, scribbled note, asking for food—nuts, fruit, canned meat. He said he was ill, had lost 50 pounds. I immediately called Judy.

She assured me that he was being taken care of, that his note simply expressed his mental state. "I think it was a kind of metaphor—he was always hungry," she said.

[and wrest
Out of failure some
Thing shining.]

JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES 1980

I did not see David at Central Islip till they called me and said that he was very ill. He had tuberculosis. I got a friend to drive me out. He was in bed, and they wouldn't let me go near him because he was so feverish and so ill, and they said that it was the first time he became rational. He started to scream at the top of his voice, "Where have you been? Why haven't you been *here?* What have you been doing?"

Several days later, on April 1st, David died.

[When you cannot go further
It is time to go back and wrest
Out of failure some
Thing shining.

As when a child I sat
On the stoop and spoke
The state licenses, the makes
Of autos going somewhere--

To others I leave the fleeting
Memory of myself.]

"No Finis"

VI

THEODORE WEISS 1951

The Dance Called David

How could I know
how beyond this love
which held me to him and
by its very hold blinded me?

Hours of many days
we walked, past the reputable,
through scenes, people, past
street-names and corners,
deep
through poverty with its charming
air of things half-dropping off
into oblivion.
Words from me,
pointings to bits of color
or surprise longing
urged upon me,
recalled him
as those that burned in hell
steadied their flames to answer
one earthbound.
Like something
mattered out of air, a smile—
did it reflect the morning
songs that once enlightened?—
would flicker, then go out.

How could I know,
I who loved him, viewed
the world around us as phrases
visible of his taut unmoving lips,

a music incredible, illuminated
as a battered hurdygurdy
by the love he simply woke,

how could I know
how right I was: windows
strewn behind us, swirling
traffic, parks bouqueting lovers,
children burst from school,
all movements in the meaning
mysteriously clear he was for me.

Only now, years after
his death, do I know what
terror I called friend, what
wrestlings I walked beside, what
anguish—dance of madness, gaiety—
he adorned,
the total city
with its grey wizen streets,
each ash-pale puddle, its thin
furtive faces, and the tiniest
broken straw looked after.

Only now I see
how much he deserved—
if love must deserve—whatever
love I could attain, and more,
speechless, ignorant as a child.

These years between, now
that he is with what we are not,
time and the multiple wild fears
have helped me recognize what
first must have frightened
me away.
Time that cut us
off sharper than space can

holds out again generous hands
as he, the harmonious blacksmith,
leads me through the depths unroll-
ing, these scarred years that are
journeying and pity, of myself.

From *The Catch*, Twayne Press

PEAK CRAWFORD 1980

Life confronts a sensitive person with terror—the terror of life. And I define schizophrenia as a rejection of life. It comes from the conviction of an unworthiness to be loved. The main impression I got of David at first was of a shyness, a withdrawal from life because of a fear that was enormous. I knew he was *hurt* ....

Sick people need security, they don't need freedom. I knew David was sick—when I went to Central Islip, the last time I saw him ... he couldn't talk very well. He had deteriorated dreadfully, and I thought he must be starving to death. But knowing now that it was tuberculosis makes me feel better—I thought maybe he had done the same thing Simone Weil did: she killed *herself*.

This is another corruption in our culture, the tendency to make freedom instead of security the main goal.

FROM JUDITH SCHUBERT TO M.D. ZABEL

Little Red School House
December 5, 1946

Dear Mr. Zabel, I appreciate your letter deeply. I feel compelled to answer it, but please do not think it is necessary for you to reply.

The news of your professorship at Chicago gives me real pleasure. David would have been glad too. And your trip to South America feels like the magic carpet to me. Most of the traveling I've done so far has been in my head. But I may fly to the coast this summer. For me, this would take courage. To you, it must sound tame.

For the first time now since David went, life begins to

seem possible. I have begun an analysis too. Knowing about, and reading in psychiatry, is far from the kind of experience which I would recommend to my best friends. For the first time, I am beginning to be a person in my own right. I am being very successful at my job. Teaching children in this kind of school is a thoroughly satisfying experience. New York University has asked me to run a summer demonstration school with them, and if it goes through, I have been chosen to direct it. This makes me feel a little proud.

When I wrote to you several weeks ago, I said I thought of you as being an angel—at least I think I wrote that. And later I felt embarrassed because I meant to say "saint"! I have read many of your articles. And I feel that I know so much in you! It would be difficult to tell anyone how I think about David. I identified so closely with him that it is a wonder I did not become insane myself. I was close to it. No one knows how terrible it all was. Only recently, I have lost my terror. Plain grief can make poetry. It doesn't carry the torture I've known.

Thank you again. I know that I will never see you so I can tell you that I admire you and feel a deep affection for you.

Sincerely,
Judith Ehre Schubert

FROM BEN BELITT TO THE WEISSES

December 22, 1980

Dear Ted and Renée, ... Was I ever really told the whole story of his breakdown, hospitalizaton, and death? There were only a few sentences in a letter from Eda Lou Walton telling me enough to regard David as a casualty of World War II and leading to a poem called "The Casualty" dedicated to his memory in 1947. But am I right even about that?

Much love. Merry Christmas.
Ben

BEN BELITT 1955

The Casualty
(For David Schubert)

And have your answer, out of the instinct's need
To render its terror tangible.
For, howsoever shyly,
Under the soldier's compulsion, with a human gaze,
Puzzling disaster at a time when terror was usual,
You bent to the bullet a consented will—
You ripened volition with that other deed,
Valor's improvization, the unselving act,
To force an unspeakable image from the maze.

Infantryman falling, falling always: the fall is forever.
Fall to your certainty, no longer compelled and alone,
Yielding the gunstock to the compassionate image.
Turn from the bomb-burst by the powerless river
Forfeit in crossfire, on inadmissive ground—
Who have become that Host the nightmarch sought:
Terror's unique enigma, the time-serving will,
The shield whereon Medusa's manifest gaze
Glows like a boss and confronts its deliverer
In the bottomless pit and beast's face of the wound.
From *Wilderness Stair*, Grove Press

FRANK O'HARA 1972

For David Schubert

"Best of all—an aviator on a fire net."
I am Gabriel (dressed in corduroy) am
not listed in the Manhattan phone directory
but am in Edwin Denby's New York cycle
of poems
we live here in the falling

plaster and get this way that way
going to Gorky shows and looking at
"ink and chalk forms" all the time it is
simpler to be by the sea or in a boat
then you can jump

in

I miss you

but I never know you anyway so there
you are or do I know you better than I
would have at 42nd Street and 8th Avenue

well you go up we follow you but you
go up we follow you but you go up we are
following you but you are gone last
Saturday I saw *The Knights of the Round Table*

From *Collected Poems*, Knopf

FROM EDA LOU WALTON TO JUDITH SCHUBERT 1946

Dear Judy: You did all you could to make David's life that which he would choose, my dear, and more you couldn't do, and you saved all there was to save ....

THEODORE WEISS 1980

Judy and I had gone over the poems, what she had been able to salvage from David's last, determined effort to destroy all his work, all traces of himself, and himself, and had put them into some order. The book, entitled *Initial A*, a title David had liked and appropriate, we thought, to a first and last volume, appeared, in the Macmillan Series and had some respectful reviews and attention, but failed to establish itself or David. Frank O'Hara, John Ashberry, Kenneth Koch, and other members of the so-called New York school had grown aware and appreciative of David's work, its relevancy to them in its mastery of the life, especially the inner life and as that inner life entangles with the outer, of New York City.

That David was an early, lonely pioneer of a whole group of poets, anticipating Lowell, Berryman, Plath, Sexton, and the like, must be obvious to anyone in possession of his work and the terrible facts of his life. One might say that his trouble in establishing himself as a poet was appearing and living just a few years too soon. But David was unlike the "confessional" poets in that, though he clearly employed the materials of his life and world, he was concerned—usually successfully—with converting and transforming those materials into free-standing poems. The poignancy and the terror of the personal, our modern cosmic loneliness, are amply present and powerful in his poems, but usually these are maintained and contained by wit, a drollery, a mercuriality, and a sense of art that seems to oversee the whole proceeding. It is the always startling freshness of his work, its crackling, nerve-taut immediacy, that prevails.

Robert Frost came to read at Bard College. After his reading we talked about poetry and poets. The talk turned to the poet in the university, and Frost reminisced about young poets he had known, at college and elsewhere. Suddenly he quoted "Atta boy, Jesus Christ Professor!" His astonishment was complete—"How did you know??"—when I responded, "O, yes, David Schubert." After I told him of my friendship with David and my desire to see his poetry published in book form he applauded the project and offered to help with it; when the time came and we asked if he, now very old, would write an introduction, his secretary answered that Mr. Frost was already behind in many commitments but that he "wants to tell you how glad he is that the book is to be published and he thinks the poems should stand on their own worth." It seems that everywhere and every time David was cursed by that evil sprite, bad luck, who haunted David all his live and even beyond it.

After Five Years

Beside the lumber
recently cut, some men
struggling up a muddy snow-
ridged road, and five-stories-tall
in your peak-roofed apartment
where warmth was common,

I, after these years
wondrous about returning,
fearful a little,
more than a little hopeful
before the host of possibilities,

I, anxious for revival,
standing at your porthole
window, the latenoon sky
sullen above your sea,
ships
puffing along, pedlars,
so that I cannot, do not care
to pursue romantic thoughts
of their cargoes, voyages,
possible great grief,

I, a raveled thread
at the needle's eye, asquint
after the flashing pattern
of my silent partners,
try hard,
with disappointment, to think
of you spun back, gathered
into your imagery:
this sky
not yet beginning to ripen

your excellent moon,
the mindless sea
adrift with its abstract boats.

For nothing happens, no north
of thunder scours my hearing,
no lightning hallows my thought
or brightens my conscience,

not even this fruit, here
in this bowl as it used to be
promising incredible secrets,
stirs its full lips
to the words of love
and acknowledgement
we somehow always expected;

not the books where you left
them, dusty, close-mouthed
as the breath we mixed
sometimes beat into a blow

that swirled this room,
crow's nest, back
to first seas breaking,
furious exultant pain.
                Only
five nameless unshaped men drag
along the turning muddy road
next to the new wood, raw,
awkward, an eye-sore,
five men for the moment
flickering
                (even as flakes
of snow begin to prick the sky-
light we used to praise,
a god's view, so we said,
for our eyes raised)

then
slipping—hardly anguish
—through a narrow break
in the grey fence just below;
and they are gone.
From *The Catch*, Twayne

Post Script

Vol. III of QRL, featuring a large group of poems by David Schubert, appears Summer, 1946. It announces the death of David Schubert. W.C. Williams in a letter to QRL calls Schubert "a nova in the sky" and places him above Eliot and Pound in what he called the "new anthology—that is poets who are carrying poetry on beyond its established boundaries."

1946: The Schubert manuscript is sent to Tate at Holt and Co. It is rejected.

1947: Louise Bogan, along with Zabel, recommends the manuscript to Doubleday. It is rejected.

1948: Judith Schubert marries Sydney Kranes.

1949: Swallow rejects the book.

1953: Weiss tries Eliot at Faber and Faber. It is rejected.

1957: Weiss meets Gregory who suggests Grove Press. It is rejected.

1960: Emile Capouya, who had printed Weiss' first book at Twayne, is now editor, with M.L. Rosenthal, of a paperback poetry series at Macmillan. Weiss' second book is accepted and he suggests Schubert's book.

1961: *Initial A* appears.

FROM HERMAN GREENBERG
TO *THE AMHERST STUDENT*

October 27, 1961

Dear Editor: Recently you carried a perceptive and sympathetic review by Mr. Stephen Arkin of David Schubert's "Initial A." Fifteen years after Schubert's death it is most gratifying that the poems were published and that you

reviewed them.

I have no quarrel with Mr. Arkin. Indeed, I offer him my hand for his understanding. However, twice in the review he uses the word "failure" in referring to Schubert's life. To those who were intimate with the poet and his work the concept of failure, as applied to him, is wholly inadmissible.

There was tragedy and there was hardship in full measure. But, there was joy and love and, most importantly, there was a life lived to its utmost capacity. He served the altar with fidelity and the gem-like flame never sputtered. He had the devotion of friends and the respect of his peers. No man had more loving or understanding wife.

There was no accidental design to all these wonders. He was a poet full and dedicated ....

Very sincerely,
Herman A. Greenberg '30

FROM BEN BELITT TO JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES

October 26, 1961

Dear Judy, This is to tell you of my great joy in having at last David's *Initial A* .... Readers will speak of David in the only way that ever matters: by their homage to a poet whom even the furies could neither diminish nor corrupt.

FROM MURRAY SCHUBERT
TO JUDITH SCHUBERT KRANES

1961

Dear Judy ... I jestfully chided my ten year old daughter who had written an autobiography as a school assignment. She had described her uncle as a "famous poet" in her opus. She became indignant, asserting with the naivete so typical of children that she never doubted his fame.

ARTICLES

Schubert's Unfinished

by John Ashbery

I first encountered David Schubert's work in the early 1940's, when I was in high school and trying to find out as much as I could about contemporary poetry. This included reading the annual Oscar Williams anthologies and as many little magazines as I could lay my hands on in rural upstate New York. Schubert was one of the poets who impressed me the most then, though I continue to believe that there was a lot of very exciting poetry being written in the thirties and forties by poets who, like Schubert, have been forgotten since.

At some point in the sixties I picked up a paperback copy of *Initial A*—marked down to 75 cents from its original price of $1.50—and discovered Schubert anew. Since being asked to contribute to the present volume, a year or so ago, I have discovered him a third time and now carry *Initial A* with me on travels. For me it's one of those books that poets keep for themselves, to remind them of what poetry can be when the writing isn't going well and one feels out of touch with the possibilities of poetry. To sit down for a little while and reread some of Schubert's rare and poignant verse is like opening a window in a room that had become stuffy without one's realizing it.

Schubert presents a specifically American experience that reminds one of certain contemporaries—poets such as Delmore Schwartz and Hart Crane (though there is a ponderous side to Schwartz that Schubert doesn't have; nor are there echoes in Schubert of the portentousness that for me mars Crane's poetry), but also artists like Walker Evans, Arthur Dove, Hopper and Reginald Marsh and composers like Ruth Crawford Seeger. That is to say that it's recognizably of the same climate and period. In reality, Schubert's poetry, both wildly disjunct and secretly cohesive, is like no one else's art. Who else could have written these lines, and what is happening in them?:

And over tight breath, tighter eyes,
The mirror ebbs, it ebbs and flows.
And the intern, the driver, speed
To gangrene! But—who knows—suppose
He was beside her! Please, star-bright,
First I see, while in the night
A soft-voiced, like a tear, guitar—
It calls a palm coast from afar.

His poetry is made up of moments like these, that are like a complex, dissonant, astringent musical chord. Analyze it and it falls apart, or at any rate the analysis does. The parts have to be kept together, their possibilities allowed to remain open-ended, for the full range of the chord's savor—bitter to acidulous to perilously sweet—to register.

I don't think it's demeaning to call Schubert a "poet's poet"—a poet whom poets in particular treasure for the knowledge of the craft of poetry he can give to a practitioner of it, but also one whose work is open and available to everybody. He is always kindly and tactfully ushering us back to square one, reminding us that we have to start all over again at the beginning when we approach the writing or reading of poetry.

"What in the world are you trying to do
In the small room, shivering so.—But
It won't hurt it really won't, tell me!—
I'll touch you with my thought and we—
We'll walk out on the sea as one
Crosses the street, and on the sun
In amber day, before!—but run!—
The road can catch and catches us—
But the black buoys! and before
Those buildings lean down grabbing us—
Run! It won't hurt. Learning's like
Learning to walk after a long
Sickness, singing, happy as
Happy children all day long."

Homage to Schubert the Poet

by Irvin Ehrenpreis

The direction of David Schubert's best work is toward making poetry out of the inexpressible. Typically, the poet turns on himself as he tries to speak, and smiles at the effort to render attitudes so deeply ironical that the language must take one step back for every two steps forward. Schubert is allergic to clichés but feels challenged by the task of incorporating banalities into the life of the imagination.

A poem opens, "A ghastly ordeal it was." The words plainly fail to convey the emotion; but the reason is that they spring from the younger self, whose ordeal is the theme of the poem. They suggest the rawness of youth, and the mature poet replies with the subtler style of the accomplished writer: "In/Retrospect, I am no longer young."

Now analyzing his consciousness, the poet observes his younger self as if he were pondering a sexual attachment:

> Wise, sad, as unhappy as seeing
> Someone you love, with whom life has
> Brought suffering, or someone you
> Have nothing in common with, yet love,—
> Unable to speak a word.

The echo of "Gerontion"joins the fecklessness of the youth to the inadequacy of the poet's speech.

The poem is called, "No Title," being about the formation of the poet's character, which is of course still unformed. The younger self remains in the older, an object of sympathy but not a person that one can help. Inarticulately, the poet witnesses the pain he has not left behind. Try as he will, he cannot console the sad boy that he was.

His genius, like the figure of the discus thrower, stays too, always ready to act, never acting. Maturity has brought a degree of knowledge. The suffering can therefore become the material of art. But the boy, out of touch, keeps his sadness—also like an unchanging Greek statue:

> I stood there on 42nd Street and
> Eighth Avenue. I stood there with two
> Nickels.

The memory of poverty recalls the insubstantiality of accomplishment. With his wiser and better fulfilled character, he yet remains, like all artists, ever on the brink of poverty: "How little space there is/Between success and nothing at all." Having echoed Eliot near the start, he echoes Shakespeare near the end. As if exorcising the ghost of youthful frustration, he contemplates the old (that is, the young) but also present self, like Lear unable to revive Cordelia:

> Never. Never. Never. Never. Never.
> Shall I stand spellbound by the
> Reiteration's disaster?
> No! What is
> Over is over.

Only, of course, it is not.

At the same time as language defeats Schubert, it is also his salvation. In a poem called "Corsage" he plays with the etymological pun of "pansy-pensee,"and echoes Wallace Stevens. Once more, the gap between experience and expression is the theme. Asked by a young lady for an account of himself, the poet can only voice a cliché; for how could he possibly tell her of the savage nightmare that constituted his early years? Fortunately, she acts out his consolation, because she meets him a day later with an image of hope:

The next day you wore a
Corsage of pansies.
Exultantly alive, serious scholars
Of melancholy, brave and lionhearted
With thoughtful thoughts.

So he changes what might be called his thoughtless (or unthinkable) thoughts, and allows the blossoms to absorb him, "These pansies, profoundest/Professors of the world's woes." The alliteration suggests the rich color of the flowers; and again "professor" suggests (by etymology) not only a scholar but a speaker aloud of the poet's sadness, to which the pansies give the adequate expression that his words (so he says) cannot. The poet too must transform bleak moods into seductive verse. His congenital gloom must give way to gladness.

The symbolist techniques which have kept Schubert's work from fading, depend on such a movement from despair to exultation. Those techniques make the poems obscure but alluring, and responsive to continual rereading. Behind the devices of art there is also a peculiar view of human development. According to this, childhood, painful and secretive, sets the boy or girl yearning for an exalted, colorful style of life such as one glimpses in fairy tales, in carnivals, and in those moments of unexpected pleasure that even a deprived youth encounters. But adulthood betrays the dreamer. Its tedium and disappointments provoke regrets over the passing of the hopeful years, delicious in retrospect because ultimate despair and disillusionment had not yet infused themselves into the poet's character.

"Kind Valentine" is a splendid accomplishment—compact, obscure, and dramatic. The poet seems to be presenting a girl in various stages of her short life, all seen together as one might scan one's entire existence at the moment of dying. Joanne as a sad child, then as a girl dangerously in love, next as a psychotic mourning the loss of her mysterious lover, and so as a suicide and at last as a

corpse, all appear at the same time, because the poet shifts rapidly among the phases of a pathetic career.

The imagery is dense but not clotted. Joanne, herself a flower, seems vulnerable and brief in blooming. The white rose given her by the beloved fades significantly as she breathes on it; and the poem will close with an evocation of violets and forget-me-nots suggesting the devotion the lonely girl had for the lover who abandoned her. (They also recall Ophelia.)

In the lines which Schubert employs on Joanne as a child, she goes to bed and dreams of herself as the sleeping beauty. But in the course of the poem, Prince Charming wakens her from sleep only to drive her to self-destruction. Meeting the challenge of banality, the poet is careful to indicate his own remoteness from the commonplace desires and disappointments of Joanne. Yet his sympathy is never condescending. One suspects that he considers his own aspirations to be as childish in their way as those of Joanne. The end of the poem offers us a stunning combination of fellow-feeling and evocative imagery, rich patterns of sound, and unpretentious, exquisite language. The rhymes, like the images, bring out the conventionality of the girl's imagination. But the tone of the poet could not be more tender:

> Please, star-bright,
> First I see, while in the night
> A soft-voiced, like a tear, guitar—
> It calls a palm coast from afar.
> And oh, so far the stars were there
> For him to hang upon her hair
> Like the white rose he gave, white hot,
> While the low sobbing band—it wept
> Violets and forget-me-nots.

In other poems Schubert again draws an ironic parallel between the hackneyed or vulgar longings of ordinary people to escape from routine and the desire of the poet

for high esthetic self-realization. The impossibility of achieving this supernal existence is suggested by a title, "When Apples on the Lilac"; for of course apples neither grow on lilacs nor mature when lilacs blossom. The same poem opens with a list of carnival attractions that inserts surprising invitations among the familiar brass band and cocoanut shy:

> DANCE WITH FRIENDS IN THE EVENING!
> WITH THE TRUNKLESS MAN IN THE MOON!
> SEDUCTIVE TUNES! IRRESISTIBLE ORCHESTRA! SAIL
> FOR THE BALI ISLES IN A DINNER PAIL!

Among the echoes of "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat" we suddenly find ourselves in the mind of a poet as he recalls those moments of childhood when the note of romance interrupted the drone of the ordinary world. In a brilliant image Schubert brings together the poem he is writing and the false promises of a boy's fantasy: "The paper airplane sinks, freighted with lies—"

The poem actually is a set of modulations declining from the cheerful invitations of the opening lines to a bitter allusion to Dante—the last words of *Paradiso*—at the close. (Triple rhymes suggest terza rima.)

> And pity like an adolescent cries
> —Crossing the street—self-conscious awkward tears
> For love! ... Love that moved the stars
> Begs at the corner and a hag's face wears.

We remember that Schubert did his work during the Great Depression, and that his own suffering was not merely private but an element in the agony of a nation.

Schubert gives us his theory of the imagination in a poem of extraordinary power, "Midston House." Since he conceives of himself primarily as an embodiment of creative imagination, the poet must elevate common experience into emblems of the esthetic faculty at work. He

must, Schubert says, take the humdrum of tedious routine and transform it into a luminous figure of creative power. At the same time the poem is a revelation of the inner self; it is a means of saying what could not otherwise be told about one's deepest feelings.

Not only does Schubert elaborate his symbolist theory in "Midston House," but he also puts it brilliantly to work. When he turns on the electric light in an unpleasant room (dull reality) at the beginning of the poem, he produces an artistic insight at the same time: the two senses of illumination operate together.

> What is needed is a technique
> Of conversation, I think, as I put on the
> Electric light.

The movement of poetry then must be in appearance the random movement of conversation—not, however, the narrow vocabulary of the surface "irritations which pile up" but rather the expression, "Metamorphosed, of what they are the/Metaphor of;/and their conversion into light."

In section two of the poem, Schubert finds himself on a bus, going to an appointment in a hotel; and he notices how unexciting the people seem, caught as they are by "the insurance of habit," which the poet must break through. Like the relaxed but drab citizens, he is not fulfilling his own promise of talent. In section three he asks,

> Yet how to transform
> The continual falling clouds of
> Energy, into light?

He hopes that the man who will meet him may know how to effect transformation. The poet sounds as if he has just lost a job that interfered with the composition of his poetry. The gloom and bitterness that the failure has fed reveal his uncertainty about his true vocation—the career of writing. The appointment seems to be for the

discussion of a new job. The poet fears that the man—of "vital intelligence"—will not show up, even as he fears losing the inspiration that awakens his genius.

But the man does appear; the conversation is highly satisfactory; and the meeting even approaches, in effect, a religious experience, although the two men indelicately talk of the faults of a third, whose unworthiness the poet is afraid that he himself may share. This suspicion leads to a fresh insight:

> But the poem is just this
> Speaking of what cannot be said
> To the person I want to say it.

So the man of vital intelligence is like a messenger from the realm of the imagination, one of Rilke's angels.

Evidently, the poet secures the new position, which will support his creative talent and will also connect him with the man "Whose handshake was happiness." The future, consequently, is like a bus ride, taking him away from the cramped room, dark and lonely, of his deprived existence—the place where the poem began: "On the vehicle, Tomorrow, I will see/That man, whose handshake was happiness."

With such a view of art, the poet can define himself through an imaginative act of identification with just those persons who seem to lack color and originality. In the end, it is they, and the common things of their environment, that must be exalted. So the seasons of the year become symbols of the stages of poetic abundance and drought, against which appropriate figures—sailors, girls, a beggar—evoke the loss or triumph of inspiration. Emotional states and moral principles join the cycle. As a result, such articles as selfishness and a lovers' quarrel, or winter and a want of creative energy, can be associated by the poet. It is Schubert's task to transmute them.

In the poem, "The Meaning of Winter,"the speaker is in a wintry phase; and consequently, he gives the job of

imaginative transformation to a friend, who does the work of a muse. The friend's name is carefully unpoetic, as are the place names. But the images and language (reminiscent of Wallace Stevens) call up the realm of metaphor and art. In conveying his discontent, Schubert has indeed exalted its significance, even as his theory requires; for it is of course he who really supplies the poetry:

> Carolyn told me:
>
> "The winter wind on Amsterdam Avenue
> Behind St. Luke's Hospital, listens, halts.
> It is a maimed crippled beggar, wanting a
> Handout. The sailors talk of big
> Times. Then the winter wind begins.
>
> "The winter wind blusters like
> A base ingrate; has no patience.
> Muck tramples the green film of
> Girls in remembered frocks."

Eliot and Shakespeare (the song from *As You Like It*) are in the wind, as Stevens is beside the girls. But the fidelity to drabness, along with the power to make it shine like gold, is Schubert's own.

The point made in "Midston House," that a poem is "speaking of what cannot be said," to the person whom the poet wishes to hear it, recalls Schubert's fundamental theme, the inadequacy of language to convey the most important thoughts and feelings, or even the clash between word and meaning. Emotionally, we dare not speak out to those we love most. If we tried to do so, our speech would give a false impression of our intent.

But sometimes the words do succeed. If winter is the season of inadequate speech, the sound of sleighbells is the signal of poetry coming through. In "Victor Record Catalog," the poet discovers that he really likes a girl and that she likes him. But their feelings emerge in riddling

sentences. Rather than tell us what he or she said, Schubert gives us a mystery—a speech that imaginatively illustrates the process of true affection, like poetry, rising from silence and dark language.

People speak "by contradiction," the poet says. So the poem is filled with contradictions. Outside, the weather is August heat. But the poet feels wintry and inarticulate. Outside, the Coast Guard is drilling for war. But the discovery of his affection makes the poet exude friendliness, and he imagines the girl as saying that all men are brothers. In her expression she looks "Alternately too severe and too/Gentle." But the poet thinks of her, in his closing words, as "the gayest person."

The central contradiction is between the intimacy of the pair's emotion and the remoteness of their apparent positions. The girl lives in a warren of offices; and the tortuousness of the building symbolizes her inaccessibility to plain speech. So also there is a myth at the center of the poem, whose obscurity defies us to reach the poet even as he has reached the girl.

To help us, the symbolist technique provides a parallelism of image and meaning which cuts across the contradictions between speech and emotion. If the girl's true character can only be approached through a tortuous route (by reversing the apparent sense of her language), we have also seen that in a correspondent image she lives off a passageway that is tortuous or, as Schubert says, "Kafkalike." He therefore imagines her as speaking in the manner of Kafka, telling a parable that indicates the relation between the poet and either herself or the reader.

In this enigmatic tale the two friends succeed in making a journey "under the four winds," or under aimless motion among transient relations. They pass the "enemy's chariot," or the threat of death; and they pass a river "where drown the attached," or the river of forgetfulness, which breaks up friendships. They survive because they are "glad," or rescue each other from despair. If the poem comes off, the author and reader make a similar journey

together, achieving an esthetic design rather than random motion, and building a work that will last and not be forgotten; and they find gladness or pleasure in their cooperative accomplishment.

The analogy with music springs from the opening metaphor, that the feeling for the girl is like the sound of sleighbells in winter. Because the poet is poor, he must study a record catalog when he would like to be listening to Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. So also the wait until he may talk to the girl is like hunger for food, which conversation cannot satisfy. By negating the girl's meanings, he will transform her evasions into the cheering affection that he yearns for. He will be fed just as the reader should be nourished by the poem.

It is a mistake to concentrate too much attention on the sadness that pervades many of Schubert's poems. His humor is normally present, offering through wit and irony a gentle smile at the inability of the world to live up to his desires. Even in "Dissertation on the Detroit *Free Press*," which is an elegy for his mother, the poet starts with a restrained ironic wit that establishes a tolerable distance between the speaker and his grief. Telling of a wish to visit Detroit, where he had lived a child with his parents, Schubert quotes a condescending expression of the art critic Craven, whose tone he implicitly mocks:

> For my vacation, I thought like Silas
> Marner, being my own miser of the past,
> To revisit what Craven calls "the good
> People of Detroit." I went elsewhere.

The humor is delicate and at his own expense. The poet always seems aware of the contrast between his ambition and his accomplishment. (He also knows how much stronger his talent is than that of more obviously successful writers.) The difficult style itself has a comic aspect; for Schubert associated the imagination with light, and admired a lucid style at the very moment when he could

only satisfy his expressive needs with obscure complexity. In a letter to Ben Belitt, he says, "I've thought of writing utter transparency of expression with terrific intensity—but that, I suppose, is a matter of a lifetime" (15 September 1938).

In the masterly "Dissertation on the Detroit *Free Press*," Schubert's quiet smile provides a seductive accompaniment to the tender, self-deprecating pathos of his speeches to a dead mother. (Here the flowers are the verses:)

> I offer you a candle, old fasioned
> Fidelity, on your grave, O lonely dead,
> To whom unhappiness no longer makes a difference.
> These flowers, which I do not bear, I drop
> On your tombstone ....

It may be apropos simply to mention here the refinement of Schubert's phrasing, the care with which he balances rhythms and sound patterns in lines like the following, on the train's motion—lines in which the opening and closing words are matched like the parallel tracks on which a train composes its sibilant murmur. (The poet says he is going to—)

> Spend seven hours watching cities
> Tossed away like memories, hustled
> So that I have to tell myself that this
> Tempus of existence, rather than a tempest
> Is life, with all these people I am
> Living through their lives.

Even when the steady tone of a poem is comic, Schubert maintains his care for expressive effects. In "The Mark," which is a humorous treatment of his sense of failure, the poet draws a contrast between the "B-" that God has given him and more interesting examination marks. Here is the *C*, with its aural and visual puns:

Think of the sinuous bosom
Of a *C*, which sees all and feigns
Indifference! An open mind is a *C*, a good
American, friendly, someone you can talk with.

Again in "BA (On the Same Theme)," he complains punningly and allusively about his lack of a research degree. (Notice the "wagging" effect of the sound patterns in the "BA" line, as the sheep becomes a dog; and the punning allusion to Virgil's "facilis descensus," or easy descent to hell; and yet again the Latin "ab" or "from":)

I see my name baaing
At me, like the blackest sheep of all.
All my associates have a great many
Degrees, BA wags after me
Like the can on a beaten cur's tail ....
Who wants to be
The facile descensus AB, from being
To ineffable lowest depths. I tell you I'm
In a black mood. As
In the voices of grieving Euripides, woe
Is me.

But in truth "woe" is only a part of Schubert. Wit, pathos, and true imaginative genius are much more of him. It is time we saluted the poet as a rightful heir of Stevens, Eliot, and Crane.

Means of Gaining Admission

by David Galler

The reappearance, after almost twenty years, of David Schubert's poems (chronologically arranged by Theodore Weiss and Judith E. Kranes) must come as a harsh lesson to many of our poets, renowned or otherwise. The Dr. Johnsons of an American Scene, of mill town albas, of shredded hearts-in-the-home, will stiffen, privately, at this book which beats them so badly at their chosen theme of failure, breaks through the stench of confession they have broken through to, arrives at splendors other than self-pity.

To soften the blow, let it be said the first half of the book is apprentice-work. It is sufficiently cloaked in period-nuances and -concerns to remind of other poets. These are poems with "a mood like Les Sylphides," or "blue snow behind the American barn," or "Mr. Riscica in his undershirt." Rhetorical, nostalgic, stocked with images of public parks and parlors, calendars with Indian maids, they bespeak by their rich reference to actualities, apostrophes to what is myth or history, a vision not wholly assimilated. The figures in these poems are obvious surrogates. Yet, in these very poems, if "The air is sweet and heavy with the romance/Of Indian maidens," it is also true that "(The Indian maid canoed across the Erie/Coal calendar on the wall very/Quietly, a mustache scribbled on her lips.)" Instances like the latter pepper the poet's field of vision in the early poems and presage an imagination to come.

Midway through Part III the poems begin to depend for their very existence upon "the meetings of/Climactic moments"; they have become cunning collages. Descriptive rhetoric, external projections of the self have vanished; Catullan fragments, rapid changes of focus, have taken over to express the exact conditions of what, in the earlier poems, was a diffuse loneliness. The facing poems,

"The Skeleton in the Closet" and "The Transformation," define these conditions: the poet's shame at involvement with those he hates and his grief at being unable to communicate with those he cherishes. This inability to selectively relate is the theme on which he spends his fascination for the rest of the book. It *is* precisely a fascination, for the will to "homecoming and laughter" remains in perfect contradiction to "Lypothymia of grief". The result is sometimes a brilliant mock-helplessness:

> Curled so, on my own leaf, I have
> Like Augustine proceeded through suffering
> To suffering because I suffered and
> Suffered over that, hunting not the current movie
> But the star, more radiant than Greer Garson ....

His inability to "sophisticate" his failures, to make them negotiable poetical tender, leads him (toward the close of Part III and all of Part IV) to write a poetry of raw, daily encounters that is jaunty with black bile, grotesque with defeat, violent with innocence. The situations seem of the moment; they are *not* self-consciously reconstructed case-history:

> I would like to ask that dumb ox, Thomas
> Aquinas, why it is, that when you have said
> Something,—you said it—then they ask you
> A month later if it is true? Of course it is!
> It is something about them I think. They think
> It is something about me ....

or, about being in the presence of one who "spoke—By contradiction":

> ... I study the Victor Record Catalog instead
> Of listening to the paragon's
> Prerogative: Eugene Ormandy, my
> Expectancy

Makes me slightly sick, as when years ago,
Hungry for food, I came to friends and they
Talked; now I wait for her to speak
The meanings which I must negate before
I am admitted to the gayest person.

Means of gaining "admission" were several, and in masterful originals such as "Midston House," "Victor Record Catalog," "No Title," "The Creation of Others," "The Mark," and "Another Poet Called David," David Schubert desperately tried them all.

Reprinted from *Poetry*, March, 1962.

"This is the book that no one knows"

by Reginald Gibbons

Speaking of his dead friend in an interview, Peak Crawford said that "art is a substantiation of the heart." David Schubert's heart was buffeted and bruised, contradicted and full of pain. He suffered pain from his own childhood, and as a young man could not raise a sufficient barrier against the pains of the world, either. These struck him deeply, and he was less and less able to write as illness cut short his work, the worst years of his decline coinciding with World War II.

To characterize his poems one would use words like jagged, nervous, energetic, brittle—and also euphoric, whimsical, dreamy. Although his technique shows that he was intent on accuracy of statement, and would violate syntax, grammar, and every sort of expectation, in order to find the right words for the complexity of what he felt, there is also a simplifying impulse (in his early work, especially) that seems touchingly pure and foredoomed, to transpose feeling onto a toy-scale, taking it back into the world of childhood where happiness could perhaps be nurtured once again, if only it could be planted there and given a second chance.

> The paper airplane sinks, freighted with lies
> ("When Apples on the Lilac")
> The Mayflower launched on the toy sea
> ("Gold Chariot")
> The chandelier was bright with small toy tears
> ("Peter and Mother")
> The sail limps in the empty cup, quite tame
> ("The Letter")

And yet "sinks," "lies," "tears," "limps," "tame," show clearly that this impulse of Schubert's was wistful, not genuinely hopeful. The only striking exception is the very

early and happy poem "When Apples on the Lilac," which seems like a small poetic version of Calder's exuberant circus.

A scholar might show how Schubert's work leads from Hart Crane to John Ashbery, from contorted compression to calculated offhandedness; the tense exertions of a high-wire act, and no net below. He often piles up poetic effects, displaying an odd iridescence in the words, which sometimes with flat declarative tones absorb all the light and give back only gloom, and at other times reflect the light in full with glitter and pathos. In the same poem he can range from one effect to the other, from intractable, nearly unmanageable, feelings of pain to irrepressible shouts of sharp, self-mocking wit, good-humored and bright.

Since Schubert did not survive to define and refine his poetic manner more consistently, to arrive at what was not only inimitable but also mature, it is just this quirky variety and restless experimentation that characterize his first and only collection of poems—which he did not live to see published in its full version. There are some progressions, however. He went from using end-stopped four-foot lines to the most abrupt free-verse line breaks, and this shift is perhaps itself the clearest statement of his poetic preoccupation with the fragmentation of experience and understanding, a puzzle he was never quite able to put together: "Hunters of/The unshuttered nudes of accidental windows." Another preoccupation: the clear conversational expression of complicated feelings:

> But the poem is just this
> Speaking of what cannot be said
> To the person I want to say it.

(How characteristic that syntactic surprise is, forcing us to make sense of it and in so doing to see that Schubert speaks not only of trying to be understood by another, but also of being able to hear said what one needs to hear.)

Like all people, she spoke
By contradictions, so that I had to hear
The negatives of her remarks to find out
How much I liked her ....

(Again, his clever finale to the sentence surprises our expectation of the more obvious "what she was saying," and pulls us immediately into a more profound understanding of how we hang on each other's words.)

A third preoccupation is the childhood trauma of the family that was first broken, then shattered beyond that by his mother's death:

"Their love is exhausted in
Family," you told me. It is true
To my experience; what can one do?

In the poems that treat the figure of his father Schubert was particularly troubled: "The Skeleton in the Closet," "The Visitor," "No Title."

The three of these preoccupations are refracted most often through a sensibility unusually aware of the abrupt, shifting perspectives and fragmented perceptions of city life: a jarring, bustling demeanor, able at times to turn a corner toward delight, but rarely failing to undercut that with abrupt movements in the lines, incongruous metaphorical effects, rapid changes of mood. Perhaps Schubert—the Schubert who lives in the poems, whatever the nature of the Schubert who wrote them—was unable to trust his own words, because he was unable, in the poems, to trust the life and objects around him to remain consolingly stable. In the poems, change appears to be a constant threat. And although putting the poems in true chronological order is difficult, "Another Poet Called David" seems to register the last stop on this journey, along which Schubert's gifts and accomplishments were not enough to alter the course:

I reached a point where there was no
Use going on: my companion said, "Do not waken
The watchman, do not shout, he will die
Of shock if you make the slightest
Sound." I stood in utter darkness,
Cold. Without evidence of myself.

The diagnosis seems acute. Listening to another part of himself speak, he understands—and shows us—how he is rendered helpless by the quick movement that was a part of his gift. Now the slightest sound will shock and annihilate. But without movement in such a vital creature there's no life, either, no "evidence" of the self, no warmth. So to avoid pain, the choice is stillness and death. "For a short while it was a life," the poem goes on to say, brought to a standstill, and to utter directness of statement, by despair.

That directness may be free of poetic mechanism or mannerism, but it is also a pure and intolerable absence of self, of the unique jangle and jumble of habits and responses and aspects that defined the quick creature behind these lines. Doesn't this set the course for inevitable breakdown, if not of the person, then of the work? The poems confront repeatedly a conflict between the maximum utilization of poetic effect—all sorts of devices and figures and obliquities and borrowings—and the attempt to exorcise demons that have no need of euphemism or obliquity or metaphor, but are screaming with plain fury. To win a style from this conflict is to construct a sensibility from it, but the sensibility that results is by necessity fragmented, tormented, needfully evasive.

The proof of his powers as an artist, however, is that this sensibility was able to effect a transformation of the enormously weighty, inescapably troubling material of Schubert's life. The poems are not simply an odd, solipsistic manipulation of that material. The consistency of his efforts as expression, the expressive power of the techniques he employed, reveal a transforming artistic intelligence. If, sadly, Schubert did not have time, strength, or

sufficient encouragement to attain mature powers, there is nonetheless an appropriate maturity of his own moment in his work; that is, the full representation of youthful energies and sensitivities. His recognizable rhythms, the swoops of his diction, his courageous confrontation with the most difficult material rather than the more manageable—all these testify to the originality and seriousness of his enterprise. The unmistakable stamp of this is in his ability to tell us so much not only about his way of seeing the world, but also about that world itself, always there, bright and in motion, eluding Schubert's attempt at understanding it fully, but nonetheless unmistakably *grasped* in his poems. "When Apples on the Lilac," "The Darkness of the Night," "The Letter," "West by the Rain," "The Simple Scale," "A Corsage," "The Mark"—these are finished, realized work, unlike anyone else's. In them, the characteristic language of Schubert's work—eager, restless, self-questioning—is finally very winning, for its pursuit of understanding takes it past fear and pain to the sense of the made work, the moment in which perspectives double and lengthen and the work can now shape the world it has in turn been shaped by. This is the nature of the transforming power of imagination, and it is something Schubert managed to achieve despite the suffering and short time given him.

> When you cannot go further
> It is time to go back and wrest
> Out of failure some
> Thing shining.

A Footnote on David Schubert's Poetry

by Horace Gregory

I have before me a Xerox copy of David Schubert's first and only book of poems, INITIAL A. Its publication date is 1961, and many of the poems in it were published in magazines during the 1930s: yet most of the poems are as fresh, are as striking, as though their author had written them today. More than a few of them are as delicate, frail, yet durable as the flowers that he mentions in the poems; they are among the living moments of his stay on earth.

INITIAL A presents the writings of a very young man: it expresses his elliptical character, his exclamation marks, his impatience, his abrasiveness, his hatred of clichés, his fears of being lost forever—there is a hint of paranoia in some of the poems—a quality he shared with Kafka and Rimbaud whom he admired, all clearly shown in the poems, both by name and obvious influence. The young man of the poems is always on tip-toe, alert, sincere, an always genuine poet, if there ever was one, and there is always his wide-eyed split seconds of child-like insight. His poems, even when flawed by a lack of maturity, and a shunting away of wisdom, are "The Real Thing." One rereads them for flashes of child-like perception, for their reilluminating moments of irony, paradox and wit. The poem, "Kind Valentine," is a splendid example of his art; it is there that those moments are most evocative and appealing.

David Schubert celebrated the child in man, his loneliness, his love of toys, which in the poems are like Calder mobiles, little wheels and flags, all as quick as the brightness of tears. In the same fashion, the poet gives us mirror-like images of rain on city streets, child-perceived scenes of the world turned upside down, of poverty juxtaposed to wealth, of childhood to the face of a hag. And against this background are his love poems: the poet's

girl-friend, to protect the poet, kills a New Jersey mosquito with a rolled-up copy of *The New York Times* and "Looking for a House" with his girl-friend—irony and paradoxes come to light throughout these scenes which are both domestic and anti-domestic. And there is a child-like flash of terror in his poem, "Prospect Park," a signal of the young poet's sensibility.

"The Past Being with Us"

by David Ignatow

In the early part of the Sixties I came to visit Ted Weiss at Bard College, and it was there that he offered me a copy of David Schubert's volume, *Initial A*. I must confess that I was absorbed in my own fate at the time and politely thanked Ted for the copy, placing it with my luggage almost at once, but for a cursory glance at it. About ten or so years went by and Ted invited me, along with Harvey Shapiro and James Wright, to give a reading from Schubert's poems at a loft in Manhattan, a reading that Ted arranged in memory of Schubert and, if I remember correctly, on Schubert's birthdate. All four of us read, and I had chosen from among the poems in the book a small group that I had become deeply interested in, as a result of my first thorough reading of the book since those ten or twelve years of my having received the book. At that time, as I recall it now, after returning home from my visit, I again looked through the book, but more carefully, though yet with brief curiosity, and then placed the book on my library shelf to forget it.

And it was only after Ted's invitation to read from the poems, with so much time having elapsed, that I found myself once more opening the book, but now much more calmly and receptively, having, as it seems, finally settled my own affairs to my satisfaction or whatever it was that let me read the poems with absorption and understanding. I was filled with the sense of a person in my presence, and I had to realize with something of a shock, perhaps having shielded the thought from me all during the past, that David Schubert had been my contemporary in the depths of the Great Depression and had been writing as I had out of the desperation in which all of us then found ourselves: without a secure job, without a decent salary, without visible hope as poets that more would come from poetry than our own isolated satisfactions. It was a most

trying time and, as I had to realize even more keenly, reading Schubert's brief biography at the back of the book, that he and I had been of the same age at his death.

I read the poems, as if I were examining the evidence of my own past, for I had found the evidence there on the page, with its tortured social vision, its curt pessimism towards the self, its black humor towards life itself. The book read almost as a mirror image, and I had difficulty in completing my reading of it, which finally I did with a sigh of relief. But where was I at today, I asked myself, that could let me breathe that sigh, and I had to acknowledge that I had somewhere buried in myself, or better said, had written the past out of myself, published it in books and now felt it as a vague memory, only to be awakened to its reality once again by Schubert's poems.

I think he will remain among us as a poet who had the courage to live for poetry in the midst of the severest deprivation of body and mind that this country's people had yet experienced. There are many poems in the book that simply defy the imprint of the time to speak rather with an Orphic voice of secret doctrine and rites. So many of the poems early in the book are impregnable of easy meaning, as if he were blocking out the world with a world that was his exclusively, as if he were setting before him the world as it should have been, had he the power to make it so, and since that power was only to be found in words it was in words that he could make it, but by the very process of his creation he too, like myself, was rejecting that other world of hunger and rootlessness. While he was doing it with language that consciously scorned the very mention of the world he breathed in, I in my stubborn, naive way was asking this very same world to come into me with all its force to make me write of it truly, so that the world of deprivation would receive its truth through me once and for all and be silenced. I could understand Schubert's way, and I could envy him his ability to mask the world in his conscious art.

Reading further on in the book, I began to see the

poems that I might have written, with their plainness and direct observation. They hurt to read because he no longer lived to overcome those poems, to live in the present as the respected master of his medium and of that life which bred those poems. That he would have been the candidate for grants which certainly he would have received for his art; that he died in the middle of his struggle to become his peaceful self—this was the tragedy, and the poems are the signs of the wounds that led to his death.

The book, then, is his tombstone, but one that will last out the weather of the years and will be read for its deeply inscribed words as the work of an artist, if there can be any comfort in it for us, triumphant in his death.

I ask myself if I am not writing my own epitaph, feeling so closely identified with him. It is possible that I am, but what could be more a comfort and solace than to know one is not alone in this world, and that Schubert's poems bear witness to his presence in my life.

Letter

November 20, 1978

Dear Ted,

I'm enclosing the short piece I've written about David Schubert. Actually, this piece served as the introduction to my reading of a number of his poems here at the University of Delaware one evening, so it is less a critical piece, properly speaking, than—well, a recommendation, or an appreciation, or—well, just an introduction to a reading of David Schubert's poems.

Best always,
Jim

A Master of Silence

by James Wright

This evening I want to share with you the work of a poet who is, I believe, inadvertently neglected. I have been reading his poems for some time now, in solitude and with a few friends, slowly, and more and more deeply, always with the pleasure of discovery. In saying that the neglect of David Schubert is inadvertent, I mean simply that his work would, in my opinion, give pleasure to many more devoted lovers of poetry if only they knew about it.

I enjoy reading his work aloud, for his control of words in their movement is masterful. He seems to me a verbal musician whose originality and freshness suggest the work of Sir Thomas Wyatt. However, like the poems of Wyatt, David Schubert's work is not always easy to grasp on a first reading, or on a first hearing.

My plan is to offer some comments of my own about David Schubert and the significance of his poetry, and to conclude by reading selections from it.

One afternoon a few months ago in New York City, my wife and I joined a small group of people—I suppose there were about thirty of us—to hear a reading of poems

by David Schubert. We weren't acquainted with more than half a dozen people at the gathering, and we all of us, strangers and friends alike, draped ourselves as comfortably as we could all over whatever sofas, hard-backed chairs, and spaces of the floor that we could find.

Even before the reading began, I was struck by the strangeness of the occasion and of ourselves. Who were we? What were we doing there? I could answer for myself, of course. All three of the readers were particularly dear friends of mine, and I cared not only about them but also about their own devotions. David Schubert's exquisite wife was also there, and I thought for a moment that all the other people in the room, strangers to me, were simply other friends of hers, come to honor her by paying respects to the work of her husband. Yet it turned out that she was personally acquainted with as few members of the audience as I was. People of all ages were present. Even some small children sat plumped up among the overstuffed cushions.

I think the small size of that audience haunts me to this very moment because of the sense it gave me of a vastness, a fullness, an authenticity. The vastness I have in mind has nothing to do, of course, with sheer numbers of people. Like anyone else in our modern age who has thought about the problems at all, I have more than once found myself among crowds numbering in the thousands, troubled by the sense that no one was really there. But thirty of us were present to listen to the poems of David Schubert, and our presence was vivid to us because we were paying attention. Attentiveness is also a fullness. That afternoon in New York, I thought of Thoreau's remark that he had never yet met a person who was fully awake. How, Thoreau wondered, could I have looked him in the face? But we were probably as awake as we could be. And we were genuine. We all of us valued the person who can speak truly. We had come to do something else, something in a way even more difficult. We wanted to shut up, so that we could, for once, listen, and listen truly. Whether

or not we succeeded is not for me to say, but I do know, as I believe the others know, that we had found the proper moment in the proper place.

On an afternoon in New York City in the year 1978, we had come to listen and save ourselves from noise. We were damned as a matter of course to be children of distraction, confused by a world characterized by noise. And I believe that it is vain to hope that noise is merely the opposite of silence. One can obliterate the sound of a television set, but it is no help. The commercials go on in their screaming dumb-show. We gathered to hear the poems of David Schubert, and we learned something about the art of listening truly. For this poet, our teacher in the art, is a master of silences. One of the most remarkable of his gifts is his power of gathering and preserving silence in the midst of noise. One of the purest and most serene of his poems, which I'll come back to later, deals with one of the noisiest and most distracting occasions I can imagine, and the poem, "It is Sticky in the Subway," is a little miracle of genial silence.

When I call David Schubert a master of silences, I think it is only fair to say something about noise. Just as silence is not the mere absence of sound, and in fact can be the world where we hear voices most distinctly, so noise is not the mere presence of sound. It goes without saying that noise can include sounds that cause pain. The subway stop at 86th and Central Park West in New York is sometimes so loud that to hear it is a kind of ecstasy of the deep. And the voice of Barbra Streisand has given me such pain as I scarcely dreamed of experiencing on this side of the ultimate pit, a sort of glittering hopelessness, the atoms of the inner ear banging their heads together forever and ever. But there is a dumb noise also. It is noise because its nature and function, what it is and what it does, amounts to a distraction from reality. Now David Schubert is a listener, a most discriminating listener. His power of listening is the power of paying attention, a rare power in our contemporary world of distraction, rare among us all and

rarest of all among our poets. The master of silences is our best ally against noise, against distraction. It seems to me that this matter has an importance beyond plain physical comfort. Of all guides through the world of distraction, perhaps Jose Ortega y Gasset faces it most helpfully:

> Take stock of those around you and you will see them wandering about lost through life, like sleep-walkers in the midst of their good or evil fortune, without the slightest suspicion of what is happening to them. You will hear them talk in precise terms about themselves and their surroundings, which would seem to point to them having ideas on the matter. But start to analyse those ideas and you will find that they hardly reflect in any way the reality to which they appear to refer, and if you go deeper you will discover that there is not even an attempt to adjust the ideas to this reality. Quite the contrary: through these notions the individual is trying to cut off any personal vision of reality, of his very own life. For life is at the start a chaos in which one is lost. The individual suspects this, but he is frightened at finding himself face to face with this terrible reality, and tries to cover it with a curtain of fantasy, where everything is clear. It does not worry him that his 'ideas' are not true, he uses them as trenches for the defense of his existence, as scarecrows to frighten away reality.
>
> The man with the clear head is the man who frees himself from those fantastic 'ideas' and looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic, and feels himself lost. As this is the simple

> truth—that to live is to feel oneself lost—he who accepts it has already begun to find himself, to be on firm ground. Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look round for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere, because it is a question of his salvation, will cause him to bring order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas: the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posture, farce. (From *The Revolt of The Masses)*

Ortega's words have the general force of their context, where he is attempting to analyze what he calls nobility and inertia, or barbarism. His shipwrecked man is his noble man. But his words have a particular force for me also. He might have been describing the noble spirit which I find embodied in the poetry of David Schubert. For that poetry expresses a deep power of attentiveness, and a refusal to be scattered apart by the world of distraction.

To associate David Schubert with Ortega's phrase about the shipwrecked man calls for a few words about the poet's life. The details are grim enough, God knows. It is bad enough to be broke when other people have money, at a moment like our own, when custom-tattered blue jeans, once rancid with the sweat of coal miners and factory workers who welcomed brief holidays by shedding their blue jeans like dead skin, have become the unmistakable sign of comfortable leisure, the synthetic rags of an expensive poverty. But it is another thing to be broke when everyone else is broke, to know that despair is not a fashionable term from a philosophy class but the plain condition of breathing. Many people were lost during the Depression, and he knew well that, in those days, you did not have to be a poet to be desperate. His knowledge of this plain fact of life is recorded for us in his poem "Lighthouse Mission," which may be the best poem about

outcasts that we have.

I say that this poet knew despair face to face. In our brief moment, when despair retains a certain modish fascination, and when even suicide has become a sure way of entering certain chic literary circles, it seems to me important to take Dr. Johnson's advice and to clear our minds of cant. David Schubert, struck down at the age of 33 by severe poverty and illness, a young man thoroughly familiar with despair, as well acquainted with the night as the great Frost ever was, this poet is a happy poet. His gift to us is the gift of gaiety, as he moves musically among his silences in our world of distraction and noise.

I would add that these climactic moments are those in which the poet's art is so patient, so lucid and reverent, that he gives substance to the very voice of silence itself.