Impressions at the Turning

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IMPRESSIONS AT THE TURNING

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I.

I have waited months for the thawing and at last it comes. The water in rivulets runs along and under the edge of the dirty brown snow piled in hedgerows along each street and higher even than that along our driveway.

The snow when it was virgin was no less a nuisance even for its beauty. But now it is tiresome to see and the edges are flood. Its danger is gone because the streets are clean. When it was white so were the streets and people and cars slid and stuck and the snow was master; men made insignificant protest.

Now the soft days are come and slowly the dirty white yields and no one mourns its going because the soft days are exercise for fine thoughts disciplined and corrected and subdued by the hard grey overwhelming days.

Soon soon the warm soft days will come and with the warmth will come

  the quickening brightness
  you understand me
  we needn’t talk
  love
  comfort
  life.

II.

One score and one years ago my mother brought forth on this continent a new life

  just me

III.

  Reading    Satisfactory
  Spelling   Satisfactory
  Arithmetic Satisfactory
  Etc.       Satisfactory

Student is a good boy but seems withdrawn.

IV.

“Get a hit! Come on, run! go go go gogogo!”

thud

“It is an intestinal disease. He will grow out of it. But he will have to be careful for several years.”

V.

But if it happens, we are so young, what will happen? No, we are not too young if we are old enough to feel like this, so we are not too young don’t you see life is so short and all that jazz? Someday we all will die. Oh, now, now, o god it is terrible.
VI.
Class of '55, the best alive.
“It’s your life, what are you going to do with it?”

VII.
Now when I was introduced to the great people I know what there was I had yet to know and I was overwhelmed. I tried and have tried for years now to gain it all and yet I rejoice in this impossibility. About me are the people some frantic some resigned some knowing and some who look forward.

Can I give my life now? I have waited one score and one to know. Tomorrow I will know. But yesterday I said tomorrow I will know.

I am glad that I don’t yet know.

“Write it again. The idea is fine, not developed. Read more on that. You are being defensively rhetorical again. Since you can’t pass Calculus maybe the Humanities are for you. O.K., take this for three hours credit.”

oh, sure.

VIII.
What did you say your name was?
Really?
Tonight at seven, as usual.
What a lovely dance.
That is Orion. He only shows in the sky in winter.
Spring
And the warmth of you against me.
Soft your eyes and fine your firm fresh lips.
Legs and arms of promise and
Love me is Always.
We do not speak because
One, we do not have to, and
One, we do not want to.
Spring

IX.
The snow where it was white is dirty but it did not hurt to see the snow turn brown because it means that green will have its chance. Where it was hidden once under the frigid steel grip of white the green waited because it had never yet been and when its time came the green was all brightness the soft rain love was all comfort release love was all
When the snow comes again we will rot again. But right now we look back and wonder . . . but beyond holds more wonder now that the thaw is begun. The flood edges of the dirty snow threaten to wash our lawn down into the ditch and the new paint on the house is dirty and the gutters sag from the weight of watery ice but nights are starlight cold clear and so very, very endless.

SONG FOR COLD COUNTRY

At the end of every lane
The shutters of the rain
Lock the pasture down.
Brown blasts the green.

The cistern breaks the pail,
A mirror slows the mill,
I carry coal and pour
Midnight on the fire.

The tower of the wind
Sinks into the sand
With the princess still asleep
In manacles of sleet.

John Woods

John Woods is an Assistant Professor of English at Western Michigan University. Mr. Woods published his first poem as an undergraduate at Indiana University where he later studied under John Crowe Ransom. In his senior year he won first prize in poetry in the “Atlantic Monthly” College Writing Contest. Since then he has published various pieces of poetry, short stories, radio plays and critical reviews in such magazines as “The Kenyon Review, Poetry,” “The Chicago Review,” and the “Saturday Review.” His first book of poetry, “The Deaths at Paragon, Indiana,” was published in 1955.