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Inside Front and Back Covers: Poetry

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WRITING CLASS

BOSTON, 1957

BY PHILIP TABAKOW

The professor is waving his arms.
His eyes burn like falling cinders,
like sunlight through cracked glass
in the attic of a crumbling mansion.

The brittle girl in the back of the room
stares at him with total comprehension.
She thinks, "*soapcake*."
She forms the word "bootheel"
with her thin, shapely lips,
envisions the rook in rainy weather,
the incandescent bodies of goddesses
rising from chained bay waters.

Nearby, an alert housewife,
feeling the fabric of blouse
brush across sensitive nipples,
recalls the glamour of sins, past and present:
thin crust of blood
atop the fetus's freshly-hatched head,
blonde virgin's midnight rendezvous
with her saturnine inquisitor--
our wooden savior's delicate thighs.

The air crackles with a host of emanations.
And now, all along the front row,
a phalanx of football poets is preparing
to tackle the exhilarated teacher
should those wires once again
burn completely through their casings
and ravage his carefully composed mind
with a wildfire of feeling.

Philip Tabakow is Assistant Professor of English.

ELEGY

BY PHILIP TABAKOW

The poem is dead.
The words are dead.

The verbs crawl back into their tenses
and practice perishing.

The nouns flee to the suburbs
and bury themselves in Subaru wagons.

When the last adjective strangles itself
with the wires of an upright Wurlitzer,
the poet pens his epitaph
on the margins of a terminal contraction,

but the church bells and cash registers
resurrect themselves and resume their ringings—
sweetnesses to the ears unrelated
to the conjunctions of sound and sense
in little chapels called syntax and stanza.

All the gods are glad to return
to the diversions of their familial feuds
beyond the futile gestures of language.

And the speechless angels,
shimmying their gossamer wings,
strum those golden harps
for another round of celestial singing.

Philip Tabakow is Assistant Professor of English.