

## From the Office Window

By May Swenson

**M**Y ATTENTION the frame for a complication of city roofs:  
 Various levels, shapes, perspectives, angles. Puffs  
 from chimneys, ruffled flags on a school tower. Ectomorphic  
 shadows, flats of late light. Distant pigeons diving, cloud surf  
 slow-unrolling. A red construction crane north-leaning,  
 then south. Scrawl of a jet half-circling, caning  
 the sky. A monster of many surfaces rises to the split-second net  
 of my eye. How to beach it? Strokes of a pen, fleet  
 washes of a brush would fetch it eventually almost exact.  
 The process would be tedious, the body stiff, unlit  
 at capture. A camera might harpoon, arrest  
 the big thing whole—but gray and small. A cinema projector  
 could gulp and then expel it life-sized, intact in all  
 details, the entire whale still swimming. But the soul  
 would be hooked, and have to repeat itself just like that:  
 Chimneys never ceasing their white  
 evacuations. Shadows never slipping.  
 Flicking flags forever flicking.  
 Pigeons always slanting at that distance. The brick whale  
 never darkening. *Its many scales*  
*are already lamplit, the spouts and towers dark.*  
 Words? Let their mutations work  
 toward the escape of objects into the nearest next  
 shape, motion, assembly, temporal context;  
 let the progeny of interlapping shadows multiply . . .  
*Facades of light! Another cumbrous monster has risen to my eye.*

## The Salesman

By Gene Frumkin

**A**LWAYS the big ruby sun ascends  
 and the compass points to him.  
 The lake of his eyes is full of sitting  
 ducks.  
 Tomorrow is always white as laundry  
 on the line  
 and the past is dirty water.  
 So he takes the plane from failure to  
 failure,  
 buoyant as a ballerina,  
 with his parachute packed for the next  
 disaster.  
 He has learned the wisdom of futility:  
 that heaven  
 is the rumor of his good luck.

## Elegy for Simon Corl,

### Botanist

By David Wagoner

**W**ITH wildflowers bedded in his  
 mind,  
 My blind great-uncle wrote a book.  
 His lips and beard were berry-stained,  
 Wrist broken like a shepherd's crook.  
 His door leaned open to the flies,  
 And May, like tendrils, wandered in.  
 The earth rose gently to his knees;  
 The clouds moved closer than his skin.  
 Sun against ear, he heard the slight  
 Stamen and pistil touch for days,  
 Felt pollen cast aslant like light  
 Into the shadows of his eyes.  
 When autumn stalked the leaves, he  
 curled;  
 His fingers ripened like the sky;  
 His ink ran to a single word,  
 And the straight margin went awry.  
 When frost lay bristling on the weeds,  
 He smoothed it with a yellow thumb,  
 Followed his white cane to the woods  
 Between the saxifrage and thyme.  
 And heard the hornets crack like ice,  
 Felt worms arch backward in the  
 snow;  
 And while the mites died under moss,  
 The bright scar sang across his brow.



## Captain Slocum in West Tisbury

for W.M.T.

By Ruthven Todd

**T**HE penultimate voyage accomplished and the world  
 Clenched in a knuckle-busted fist, the age-old plan  
 Of sailors had to be fulfilled. Hopeful, the old man  
 Thought of an orchard and of the leaves that curled  
 In springtime buds, leaves more delicately furled  
 Than ever sails. Feet on earth now, he could scan  
 The unmoving acreage of apples, let a breeze fan  
 Cheeks stung by spindrift which a tempest hurled.

His nagging wife, however, revived thoughts of the dead,  
 Of the girl-wife buried long ago, under an alien hill.  
 The laughter of children brought his anguish to a head,  
 Producing wounds that only open sea could heal.  
 So the deep-water sailor s t out, as he had done before,  
 To suffer, as he always did, upon the shoals of shore.

## Rehabilitation Center

By Maxine W. Kumin

**I**N THE good suburb, in the bursting season,  
their canes awag in the yellow day,  
the newly maimed mince back to danger.

Cave by cave they come to building their hearing  
hard as fists against the jangling birds,  
the slipslop of car wheels, walls' mimicries,

the rebuttal of planes. Curbs curse them.  
Puddles damn their simplicity. At lot lines  
forsythia is a swipe across the face.

Under a wide sky let them cry now  
to be coddled, misread a tree, black shins  
or crack their knees on countermands;

the downgrade is uncertain for us all.

In time they will grow competent,  
love us, test and correct, feel words  
on their quiet skin, begin to light our lamps.

Six weeks and they will swing around these corners,  
grotesque and right, their appetites restored.  
It is true the sun is only heat,

but distance, depth, doorsills  
are ridged on their maps until  
they know exactly where they are now.

I see their lockstep tight as lilac buds.



## Do You Know Him?

By Edwin Honig

**N**OTHING that clicks in his closeted brain,  
Nothing that falls from his feasible tongue,  
Nothing that's stamped with his pertinent name  
Can ever be wasted or shown to be wrong.  
The positive man has made them belong.

The shapes in his shop are always glassed in  
Like specimen fish that swim into view  
With cards neatly stating their wild origin.  
They impress without rousing the angler in you.  
The positive man has caught them for you.

But if ever you feel, when his ship shape shop  
Is locked, an ink that inundates the day,  
A skip in the clock, a tear that won't drop,  
Know that such things only seem this way  
When the positive man's on his holiday.

## Like Country Gardens and the Shepherds Hey

By Byron Vazakas

**F**LIES buzzed my hammock strung  
from porch to pine  
where I vacationed, west of Lancaster,  
my thirteenth summer, weed-choked  
with romance.

Where Uncle Dan's well-hoed tobacco  
rows  
defined the view, green-leafed against  
pink clay,  
my sticky hands paged yellow  
paperbacks.

Well fed, soaked in Aunt Ida's  
lemonade,  
my exile was an opera bouffé  
where Graustark summered from the  
obvious.

A toot of peppermint an ice-cream  
cone,  
made up for brain storms stunned by  
the three R's  
like sunstroke cured with watered  
vinegar.

Among the Amish, like a wunderkind,  
I took time straight, no duty's  
spectacles  
to thread time's needle with the  
livelong days.

Sand-castled by the Conestoga Creek,  
I dreamed alone. July's leaf-heavy  
heat  
played ducks-and-drakes with crops;  
but not with me.

But summer is remembrance of things  
past,  
as in my past, until, in looking back,  
cigars clutched by a wooden Indian

Are tomb enough for Dan; and Ida's  
grave  
a Cook's Tour album of bright  
postcards  
shelved on a whatnot in a shuttered  
room.

