

Dan Gerber

A FINE EXCESS

It doesn't matter
that I've wasted thirty years
indulged myself with mindless toys
sweated problems that didn't matter
wanting to write a poem about lilacs
a poem that made some difference

I've dreamed of Walt Whitman
I've wanted to grow broader
in the chest and shoulders
wanted a dignity to replace my grin
my all American boy

I've wanted to get free of my possessions
to be generous about America
I'd like to talk with working men
and avoid violent terms
with politicians avoiding nausea
with 'concerned citizens'
and keep from yawning
to talk with Whitman
of the origin of poems

I've spent whole evenings with my reflection
the lamp on my desk
I never learn from experience
I watch myself in the dark
the window only a plane of glass

I've read of whales that sleep in the sea
of their slaughter
heard recordings of their singing
their vain attempts to find a mate
I know of wolves and their true nature
the care of their young
their mythical dangers to man

By my fire

I read of the infinite stars
their impossible distances
the remote chance of other life
similar to our own

I'm rocked by the rise and fall of the tide
indulge in the struggle of the sea turtle
the phases of the moon seen from my window
I've scouted the coast of China
the mountains of Peru
pondered the inscrutable American mind
the subtle changes of light in November
the first crystals of ice

This morning I remembered my insane lust for travel
my mania for the telephone
my need to be left alone
all I imagine is me
I begin to regret the sound of my name
drift away with Debussy and Mahler
live through the letters of Keats
the death of Rilke
those shabby and incredible lives