

REGARDING THE COMPULSION TO SAVE

All those white blouses—
crisp, never-worn,
hanging beneath
billowy garment covers—
like the day bed's duvets,
never tossed,
napped under.

All those journals—
dressed in leather,
pewter-buttoned jackets
protecting them
from back-breaking wear.
Inside, unlined pages, yet unwritten
like the untracked snow
of early winter's ground.

All those pearls—
in their silk-lined pinafores—
strands fastened under snaps,
clasps filigreed,
like a mesh of silvered seaweed,
as forgotten as keepsakes,
attic-found.

All those times
I thought of setting these beauties
free of dust, trying them on for size,
wearing any one of them,
I quickly turned away.
All white things of mine
in dark closets and bookshelves—
unfrayed, unsullied—
their useless purities
left to their own devices
like this compulsion to save.

GENESIS AT TEN

Sad to be adult, I'm thinking,
lolling on my best friend's cut grass bank,

alone, after an indoor game of jacks,
my legs, folded and gangly,

as the grasshopper's,
as the lawnmower's missed green

blade pushing up
through the spring stubble,

catching wind like a flag
twisting about its pole.

This morning, the grownups grumbling,
Trouble in River City—and I'm figuring

this is possibly no scam, though I can't hear
all their abbreviated words

for the whirl of the raked carpet's vacuum,
blare of the console TV,

Dave Garroway announcing,
...and good morning to you,

from the anchor desk: That picture,
black-and-white,

fuzzy, like a camera's ground glass,
like that bank,

lovely garden of grass I was made for
and to leave, push away

from, the way a canoe rows
back, eddies for a stream.

That scene barely a grain
in the distance now,

like the child I was,
slipping away, then gone.

A VARIATION ON
THE SMILES OF THE BATHERS
(WITH A LINE FROM *THE BEACH IN AUGUST*)
BY WELDON KEES

The tide goes in,
 and goes out,
the way the bathers enter
 and exit the water,
leaving their smiles
 with the glistening sea.

The quick and beastly world
 has called for their favor—
as in the moment
 after love,
when the wall clock strikes and the rush of
 sadness comes;

after study,
 when the scholar, closing his book,
feels bereft of words;
 after flight,
when the pilot dims his jets, the sky
 no longer his own—

the bathers' bodies untangling like
 kelp and gulfweed on the breakers
of a yacht barreling through,
 their perfect and private bathing
with the breeze and clear water—
 but an interruption—

the public ending bound to come:
 Bolting up from water—
three condos from
 their tethered umbrella, its stripes
coming closer—
 they sprint for dry sand.