

On the Town · *Vern Rutsala*

I come back again and again,
mind swirling with the fat
drunk who cried, the thin
drunk who turned mean
and wanted the whole world
to cry uncle, every wrist
twisted for his ecstasy.
I come back with my lights
off, with darkness and music
and bar napkin poems
of loneliness and lust.
I come back again and again,
moving with stealth, letting
the old Plymouth glide up
the driveway without lights,
the summer moon raking
the fir trees, moonlight bouncing
off the tub on the garage,
moonlight so bright the road
was like a silver river.
I drove back loving
the silver grass, the fencewire
beaded with bright dew, loving
the night and my life
and my dream of it.
I returned with stealth
and drank cold milk from
the bottle and ate a piece
of cold steak in the silence
of the sleeping house,
chewed hard and thought
of Thomas Wolfe and wanted
to shout against and for
the lost beauty of the world
and walked barefoot upstairs
while you, Ray and Virginia,
lay in sleep, your deaths still
far on the outskirts of town.