

JOHN GALLAHER

*A Guidebook to the Soul*

It would please me to go back, I'm thinking, looking off the balcony at the moonlight flaking over the Pacific Ocean. Turns out, they can take that away from you as well, Jenny says, one leg over the rail. And yes, I agree, as in some of Frost's happier poetry. And folk speech, don't forget, Peter reminds us from behind the potted plant. Something's ending then, we can tell. We're just not sure what, like when I first saw her and began to understand hunger. And it's funny how we're not other people by now. In purely personal terms. So she hates him because of her hurt, though hate's too strong a word. Love, maybe. By the same token, we veer easily into sentimentality and often repeat ourselves. Repeating ourselves is another of the ways in which we resemble each other, particularly about the eyes. It makes her little forehead get all crinkly. Weather's rolling in, we say, looking off the balcony at the weather rolling in, one in pentatonic and one in modal. Whitman does so very often, Peter says, trying to make it up to her. It was an experience whose crucial moral character we can only surmise. But what of the palms that had just begun to flourish? as I often don't know what else there is. OK, let's return to an earlier moment then, a time when we're elegant conversationalists who survive by special devices. And our rich inner lives.