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## My Father Drives Me to Amherst

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## MY FATHER DRIVES ME TO AMHERST

by Bill Tremblay

He knew the poet recited a verse  
at the inauguration, but wants to know  
how much he got paid. Or was it,  
like every time a working stiff gets screwed,  
*pour l'honneur?* This from a man who dreamed  
of getting rich betting on horses. I try to  
explain what I think my job is: to listen for  
the names of the living who pass time and put  
them with the families to whom they belong.  
*You think you can live on what you imagine?*  
he asks as he navigates the winding road  
between West Brookfield and Ware. I sit  
beside him like a one-legged sparrow.  
Beyond the next hill I imagine a secret place  
where he can never die. At last we enter  
the campus. I slip into the back row  
and hear the poet brush off his critics  
like snow clumps fallen on his shoulder.  
*A death wish*, he chuckles. He doesn't count  
the years of ice, the bitten prayers, candles  
snuffed at dawn, the sudden blood of wayward  
saw-blades, blizzards of crumpled paper filling  
his kitchen waste-basket. Another day is  
dawning, so dazzling our red eyes will sing.  
My father stands outside smoking Pall Malls,  
reading horses' names in *The Racing Form*.  
I listen to an old man sing about a strange

brook with rocks that fling white water  
back to the source of everything.