

Three Poems

by [Lawrence Cottrell](#) (May 2022)



Sailboats in Wollenbewegten Water, Egon Schiele, 1907

The Wheel

I would stay awhile, be content in doldrums' latitudes, the
Sun glassy-eyed lord of placid sea, fire fixed upon equator...
But ropes grow taut to canvas' pouting, sails furled unfurl
anew,

The wheel, to starboard, larboard turned, steers always
toward infinity...

Groans brig up heaves and through, time breaks o'er souls
in ferine howl.

A lookout shouts wide-eyed alarm, whose voice, bestrid ill
cyclone's wind, flings down the mast as

men! men! horizon's end!

Na night na day na saint na sin; na merry-go-round, na
Cheshire grin—

na love to swathe the lonely in—

too soon to lose, to late to win—

Just...

men! men! horizon's end!

Two Old Hauntings

We've long since told our stories -to each other—or
revealed anyway which things were fit to hear,
Have arrived at silences and knee pattings and repetition,
Affections ripened to a few griefs unuttered, gratuitous
smiles,

Learned to rub along together, become moorages in
fortune's gales...

Like a play one loves, having come to know each page of

dialogue,

each euphony and discordance,

every costume change.

We act in an empty odeum, no applause save our own, two
old hauntings of the same ghost light,

Players still in this vaudeville house of shadows, caches of
ingénue and swain hitting marks...

not art for art's sake,

but for the saving—

Usual

...a usual February of rain, sleet, snow, a season weeping to
the lees...

January's peroration.

Northers moan on the posts, ungentle winds from

Saskatoon scuff frozen puddles;

Froward frosts burn tropic visions, and yard's choirs don't
hum yet their jonquil song;

No puss paws cling to switches, no trumpets flourish o'er
time's laconic noon...

still...

Hearts beat soft tattoos down emptied vales in listless

Probing of the fuscous, cold-eyed realm of agèd winter...

Seek notus' sifting through a wood, chimeric demijohns
holding dionysian rhythms, daffodil wine...

some meadow's margin

fit to wear a spring,

some chiseled line grown vague in resurrection—

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Lawrence Cottrell has lived in West Virginia, mostly, preferring to dwell among good people, in a place where change is an unloved orphan. He has a BA from West Virginia State University and attended several graduate schools, leaving each finally to walk mist-hewn hollers and prowl wind-blasted ridges, to be where valleys can be spanned by two arms and a broom handle, and noons aren't quite sure of themselves. His poems have appeared in *The Lyric*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Good Foot* and *Grab-a-Nickel*, among others. His work is in the celebrated anthology *Wild Sweet Notes: Fifty Years of West Virginia Poetry 1950-1999*. He blooms presently at a bend of Elk River's meander.

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