

## Tim McCoy

### THE LAST WALK

*Edward McCoy 1910-1980*

He stood before the gate, already pale  
in the falling light, a little breathless  
and dust-stained from the road, smelling of leaves  
before decay. He looked into the distance  
and saw his death bloom in the falling sun,  
as it were already past, the pain and silence.  
But then he trudged forward, and I followed  
behind, through the gate that still hung crooked  
on its one hinge, passing through the tall grass  
beyond, passing the trunks that lay fallen  
in their own leaves. And farther down we went,  
raising the last dust from leaves underfoot,  
farther into the trees, already dim.  
Below we heard the creek falling lightly  
over its stones, slipping quietly onward  
into darkness. Here he stopped to listen  
as he labored to breathe, and I could smell  
the sickness sweating out of his skin. Deep  
he listened, sifting through the water's sounds  
as once he'd sifted through its sunken rocks  
and silt, looking for arrowheads. He sought  
something between the sounds, an assurance  
of something I could not yet understand,  
for he understood that silence deepens sound,  
and that loss gives what is possessed its beauty  
and strange worth, and that the place of assent  
is silent and dark, littered with the pained  
who, in their deprivation, live only  
to praise. He understood what was coming,  
standing here again by the water, hearing  
its undercurrents speak. I turned to look  
back up the hill and saw the day eclipsed,  
and the darkness already pierced by stars.  
I turned again, and he was gone. I stood  
dumb on the bank, looking into the night,  
listening. But I saw only shadows  
deepening around the trees, and heard, always,  
the creek falling lightly over its stones.

## Tim McCoy

### WOLFMAN

Daddy tied me to the tree before  
he put on the mask, that old mask  
I always called grandpa. He'd scared me with it  
before. I hated those crooked eye holes  
and that crooked mouth where I've seen teeth.  
I hated the white mop-hair. He'd chased me around  
the yard before, scaring me,  
running. I can't forget that day in the yard,  
wearing my big brother's big jeans and the t-shirt  
Mama always said I should just throw out.  
Daddy put on the old mask, just to chase me  
I thought, but he tied me to the tree  
I used to play around.  
He stood in front of me and I saw  
worn-out coins in his eye-holes  
like what I'd find in gravel.  
I heard the dogs in the pen chasing  
back and forth and barking. They knew something  
I knew but I didn't yell it.  
The trees were bare and daddy kicked the leaves  
on his way to pull the axe out of the stump.  
He came towards me slow  
and raised it up like to chop down  
a tree. I saw the branches bare  
and thought he'd stop. I couldn't get anymore time,  
I tried to put it off, I thought he'd stop.  
Daddy split my head through. I saw it  
split as my spirit got out.  
I had some hope for that body.