

Literature: An Introduction. X.J. Kennedy, ed. Little, Brown & Co. (Boston, 1987).

Michael Hogan, "Spring"

Michael Hogan, "Ernest Hemingway, 1961."

Ice has been cracking all day
and small boys on the shore
pretending it is the booming of artillery
lie prone clutching imaginary carbines.

Inside the compound returning birds
peck at bread scraps from the mess hall.

Old cons shiver in cloth jackets
as they cross the naked quadrangle.
They know the inside perimeter is exactly
two thousand eighty-four steps
and they can walk it five more times
before a steam whistle blows for count.

Above them a tower guards dips his rifle
then raises it again dreamily.
He imagines a speckled trout
coming up shining and raging with life.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, 1961

When the sun comes early
through eastern windows
and a single horsefly buzz-saws the air
it is then I rise from bed
my dreams of amputation, of teeth lost,

cloaked in the amnesia of another day
overwhelmed with trivia.

We make our own rules and lose by them.

This morning after a breakfast of coffee
and ice water I walk to the corner
feeling my liver dissolve in a
cacophony of stale beer and bad whiskey.

June drips a melody sweet as rose water
and the town wakes slowly.

These things are substance, Mary, not prelude.

Only what moves us has meaning.

The rest is lost in a weed-choke yard
or the gutter with brown cigarette butts,
orange peels, used condoms.

When words fail, the hammer drops.

Living can never be its own excuse.

I have carried this gun in dreams:

quiet ones in which a wound animal