Crack of a starting-pistol. Jean Jaurès
dies in a wine-puddle. Who or what stares
through the café-window crêped in powder-smoke?
The bill for the new farce reads *Sleepers Awake.*
MORE FROM ISSUE 88, SUMMER 1983

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FICTION

INTERVIEW

POETRY

Sappho
Prayer to Aphrodite

Virgil
The Pyres

Killarney Clary
Five Poems

Paul Eluard
Shared Nights

Geoffrey Hill
The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Peguy

Eugenio Montale
Doni Markus

Howard Nemerov
Inside the Onion

Howard Nemerov
Acts of God

Molly Peacock
Two Poems

Timothy Steele
Two Poems

FEATURE

ART
The fact that I am interrupting serious work to answer these questions proves that I am so stupid that I should be penalized severely. I will be. Don't worry...
Sharing Love
By Ross Gay  February 14, 2019
For Valentine’s Day, Ross Gay shares one of his favorite expressions of love.

David McCullough, The Art of Biography No. 2
By David McCullough

“Nothing good was ever written in a large room,” David McCullough says, and so his own office has been reduced to a windowed shed in the backyard of his Martha’s Vineyard home. Known as “the bookshop,” the shed does not have a telephone or running water. Its primary contents are a Royal typewriter, a green banker’s lamp, and a desk, which McCullough keeps control over by “flushing out” the loose papers after each chapter is finished. The view from inside the bookshop is of a sagging barn surrounded by pasture. To keep from being startled, McCullough asks his family members to whistle as they approach the shed where he is writing.

McCullough’s wife Rosalee was present throughout the interview. We were sitting in the McCulloughs’ low-ceilinged living room, which became progressively darker as the tape recorder rolled on, so that by the end of the afternoon, with the lights off, only the nineteenth-century library across the street was clearly visible. During the entire time, almost eight hours, McCullough spoke vigorously and quickly, growing hoarse but never seeming tired. In person the sixty-six-year-old McCullough is somewhat different from the image projected on public television, where he frequently hosts and narrates programs. The voice, coming out of shadows across the room, was full of emotion. His face seemed longer, his eyes larger. He gestured often, sometimes calling attention to nearby objects, such as a piece of cable from the Brooklyn Bridge. At the end of the meeting, he issued an impromptu dinner invitation and whipped up a delicious pasta with clam sauce, one of his specialties.

McCullough was born in Pittsburgh in 1933 and grew up in the boom years of World War II steel production. He attended Yale, where he studied English and visual arts, and got a job at Sports Illustrated in New York after graduation. During the 1960s he edited and wrote for American Heritage magazine and briefly worked for the United States Information Agency. His first book, The Johnstown Flood (1968), was not published until McCullough was thirty-five and already married with several children.

He has won the Pulitzer Prize, two National Book Awards, the Francis Parkman Prize and dozens of other honors, and not a single one of his books—including Truman (1992), The Great Bridge (1972), and The Path Between the Seas (1977)—has ever been out of print.
of the disaster from a cross section of the population, all in their own words.

The experience of suddenly seeing a few pieces of the puzzle fit together. The chances of finding a new piece are fairly remote—though I've never written a book without the hope of hitting the jackpot. I mean, one of the great resources I came across was testimony taken by the Pennsylvania Railroad after the Flood. It was done in a hurry, at night after work. I would come home, we'd have dinner, put the kids to bed, and then at about nine I would go to a little room upstairs, close the door, and start working. I tried to write not four but two pages every night. Our oldest daughter remembers going to sleep to the sound of the typewriter.

The author had some of the geography of western Pennsylvania wrong, I could see, and he didn't answer questions. I was extremely curious to know what had happened and why. I went to the library and found a book, and it was only so-so. The author had some of the geography of western Pennsylvania wrong, I could see, and he didn't answer questions. I was extremely curious to know what had happened and why. I went to the library and found a book, and it was only so-so.

One evening, in New York, at a gathering of writers and historians interested in the West, my boss, Alvin Josephy, pointed to a white-haired man across the room. He said, it's Harry Drago. Harry Sinclair Drago. He's written over a dozen books on the West. I went out and found out how taxidermy is done. It takes patience and dexterity, and it's smelly and grubby—a kind of work that would be very difficult for a woman. It's more likely you see something that's been around a long time that others haven't seen. Sometimes it derives from something

Then we'd take a fork, break the potatoes, and say, the Johnstown Flood!—with no idea why in the world we did it. That was about all I knew about it until I read a paragraph or two in the book about the process of studying a book. And if you do it on a boat with your whole family present, you upstage them all. There's a paragraph or two in the book about the process of studying a book. And if you do it on a boat with your whole family present, you upstage them all.
After the long, shifting account of Charles Péguy in Hill's poem, what are we to take from him? There is ready denouement. The stanza edges towards a...