

BIRTHDAY POEM

Here I step on the smoking train
With a cracked racket and a couple of shirts
(The wrong size, though); hooting and jerking
The fields and Kenyon begin to race
Into the reservoir where no one drinks--
The fixed farm^{land} and where the children range
Who we were once: the final strangers
Of the yesterdays of the darkening world.

No access, no acquaintance, And the fragmentary
And pointless and dangerous traces are stained
By the casual heirs, our divergent selves.
To a collection's slides, informative but dead.
That one yesterday among so many
Was not your birthday, just its own,
Today is your own one mistake; and the crimes
Of tomorrow must be your bad concern.

1939

