

Alma Mater Revisited

The campus seems all hollow
today as I walk in its leaves again.
The marching band warms up in the
distance for a football game of
whumpgrunters and whoopleaders--
but the booming band sounds vacant.
All the music is there--the
brass, the drums, the tearing
and merging of harmonies--
but I am gone, nowhere near it.
The now magicless bookstore I worked in
has shabby Shakespeares languishing
between glossy audio-visual texts and
sterile physical geology workbooks.

Is the college hollow, or am I?
I remember classes where
cocky professors taught
stimulating sensical stuff
which flew the way of
June fireflies after exams.
Hormone-smitten twist dancers
flexed and flirted their nervous bodies
toward flippant connubialities
while I tried to study my brain into a
tested heaven of alphas.
The fatuous sounds of
today's rah-rahs echo as before
among stately buildings that housed
the tenure-drones of worked-over lectures.
Now, whom are we all trying to fool?
College is, I confess, as dead in me
as a syllogism, but supportive America
of a Saturday puts down its newspaper,
pours out a Bud Light, and
remotely emotes from its easychair over
conference headcrunching
seen through colored electrons on glass.

Who died? Did I? Are the college sounds
I hear today on my old campus--the band,
the cheers, the dead leaves underfoot--
any hollower than 25 years ago? No, no,
I heard their emptiness in youth, but
this milieu quickened me then as liberation
from a safely parented childhood
and insurance against an empty future.
After a full life I would be most ungrateful
now to pronounce college dead,
but let us stick with hollow.