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After-Letter

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NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY REVIEW
T W O P O E M S

A F T E R - L E T T E R

An apparition rakes the letter slot
And slips a wafer-shock into the room,
Where smarting, pain-dulled eyes partake of what
Now resurrects the body of his doom:
A pen-and-ink spendthrift that speaks his hand,
And singularly lines the name you bear;—
His thoughts, filed into miles to countermand
The habits of a world he could not share.

You might restore the paper pulse, or tie
The broken veins of longing with pretense;
But hands know not their uses where they lie
In acquiescence to man's violence.
Go, seal the casket of catastrophe,
And lock his life, and put the key away!

D I D A C T I C I N D E F E N S E O F A M O D E R N P O E T

Admit the boldness of his verse if good:
The manifest divine in man is brave
Before his kind; a proper livelihood
Depends on courage. If man misbehave
The crime is cried upon the just degree
Of intellect. And if the word aborts
Within the image, still the force will be
The shock that works carthetic in your hearts.

But probe too deeply into the line's eye,
And you will even vivisect his vision,—
The dream dissector being but the shy
Possessor of the buried inhibition.
Analysis may work the patient's cure:
Physicians' own diseases are obscure.

I R E N E B R U C E