

James Miller

The Town of My Youth

I

A north town, north in mountains
the beavering trappers cached —
one — two-hundred years ago —
the religion house, in a good sky,
the two-hat temple brimmed
in roofof granite, and blacksmith tin.

On a citadel hill,
brown reddish — white yellow —
a college, and heights the trees seized,
and windows. And hanging there, paunched in history,
bankers and regents portraits, business and science
apostles' faces — presidents staring, while adolescent eyes
up from town, transcribed from their desks, worry to see,
from high schools, the oils of library rays,

pencilling What to take —
and the library sign
bearish and sear, neglected, funny
WITH ALL THY GETTING, GET UNDERSTANDING —
and downtown

the minimum wage and savings voices — Study
anything — you want . . . business, forestry,
law — anything, please — but art. The out ones
are out in art — art and writing . . .
I'd rather see you in service first — mechanic, janitor —
I don't care what you do — outside of art,
or leaving the church . . .
English, science, music, teaching — anything —
but art . . . or writing —
radio, TV, acting —
the out ones are out in art . . . We understand —
each other . . .

II

How orchards sprang
 Dark into blossom!
Cellar jelly, kitchens in leaves,
 and that girl —
What was her name?
 Who turned,
She and her boyfriend,
 And moved,
And went away
 When orchards sprang
Dark in mother's eyes
 and sunlight lined
Dead fathers
shipping to war, and back from war
 one two three four five six seven eight times!
over and back — counting over and back —
 two wars — and Korea and Vietnam —
over and back — eight times!
 Dead fathers
 on the city and county plaques
in a north town in the mountains.