

Tom Groomes

Tom Groomes wore faded, blue overalls and walked straight,
lean and stern, with narrow, gaunt face,
high cheekbones and thin lips.

Tom Groomes lived alone in a one-room house
in Licksillet, down by the river,
down by Edwin Mackey's sawmill,
hiring out to Edwin and other men.

Mr. Groomes worked hard,
talked with his hands,
ate peas with his knife,
poured stories into young ears,
drank too much whiskey.

Mr. Groomes liked Dale Alexander's children,
and they liked him.

When the car killed him that night,
as he walked home, drunk,
from Clint Vinson's pool hall,
we kids wondered if the ladies of the WCTU,
with their "Never, never!" pledges,
mightn't, after all, be right.