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## Three Ways of Looking at a Poet

Thomas Lavoie

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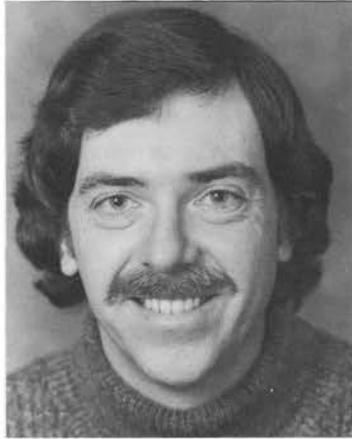
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# Three Ways



Thomas Lavoie is marketing manager at Syracuse University Press and teaches in the S.U. English Department. A graduate of LeMoyne College, he received a master's degree in English from S.U.N.Y. Brockport. Mr. Lavoie's poems have appeared in *Hollow Spring Review*, *Pulse: The Lamar Review*, *Phos*, and other journals. He has also reviewed books for *The Progressive* and *Bookviews* and for newspapers in Syracuse and Rochester.

1

I left pleased, my faith in words  
restored  
Until I saw you laughing, drunk  
some unknown girl under your arm  
Smiling, telling me of your expected  
midnight rendezvous in Buffalo  
And I cleared the snow from my window  
in anger that night  
Scraped hard at ice and tried  
to write a poem about it all  
And failed  
in spite  
The ride home long, cursed with a double  
sense of remorse

# of Looking at a Poet

2  
 You interrupted your introduction  
   spilled bravura all over  
 The floor as you  
   fumbled for the lectern  
   laughed at your balance  
 The slur, poems  
   trickling from the sides  
 Of your mouth like so much  
   spittle  
 And fumed at academics  
   at poetry built like airplanes  
   piecemeal  
 An image here, a word there  
   and tried to convince us  
 With your poems  
   like stilettos  
 Shooting out  
   slowly, embedding themselves  
 Not in the heart or brain  
   but in the nerves, grown  
 Taut with embarrassment  
   as you stopped in the middle  
 Removed it suddenly  
   laughed and called it quits—  
   I guess that's enough—  
 Probably stumbled home in the  
   dark singing Irish drinking songs so  
 Drunk on yourself on your poems and perhaps  
   fell  
 Upon one its sharp edge  
   running through you like a  
 Now forgotten song

3  
*He resigns: January 7, 1972*  
 You were the one who had it all  
   the name which retained our  
 Glimpses of genius  
 Standing there like some agèd  
   bookseller, glasses  
 Tottering on the edge of your nose  
 The books worn and bent  
   hanging barely from the crumpled  
 Armpit of a coat too large  
 You tried so hard  
   but couldn't  
 Everything getting in the way  
   your life, your speech  
 The drink so easily visible  
   in your empty eyes  
 The shaking waving hands  
 You drawled, ran on  
   garbled and coughed  
 Standing there almost  
   falling reading your poem to your  
   dead friend the words  
 Lost  
   dying before us  
 The terror of it all  
   the fear, the awful anguish  
 Coming out in bits and pieces  
   a poet reeking of life  
   lived perhaps too long  
 And hard an object now paying  
   the price for having  
 Loved too often, too deeply  
   too much  
 Carrying your poems on your back  
   like some burdened ancient ship  
 Screaming insults at the dark and  
   waiting  
 Still waiting for some answer almost  
   anxious to sail  
 Home free at  
   last

—Thomas Lavoie