

2008

# Elegy for a Hometown

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## Recommended Citation

Dana, Robert. "Elegy for a Hometown." *The Iowa Review* 38.1 (2008): 167-168. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6429>

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*Elegy for a Hometown*

I'm done now with the dark houses of the East.  
My hometown.

The book is closing on my generation.

\*

Skinner satin mills  
    long gone to producing brass & machine gun clips & milk bottle caps  
are now themselves long gone.

And the orchard of 10,000 apple trees that fed our insatiable boyish hungers—  
    a wilderness of stumps and weeds.

\*

Even the river's changed course,  
    leaving Walpole's cove bleached & dry, where, in winter, local farmers  
    sawed thick blocks of ice,  
  
    skidding them up a frozen ramp to waiting wagons,  
  
horses named Belle & Sophie stamping & steaming & shaking their harnesses  
    until they rang.

\*

My Polack neighbor's dairy farm's now a golf course,  
    tees & greens & easy fairways.

We once killed black snakes there through the long summers  
    & forking up corners,  
    saved the sweet-smelling, windrowed hay from oncoming rain,

chaff stinging our sweat drenched bodies like shirts of nettle.

\*

So what's to say when a whole chunk of your life comes up missing?

You say to yourself, "Well, there it is."

Or, "Well, there it was. Wasn't it?"

\*

God's his own voyeur.

\*

After more than half a century,

I walk the town with the only man who knows my name.

\*

Soon, I'll bury my own shadow & slip away like sunlight.

\*

Simplicity's what I'm best at.

\*

In the end,

a small box of a house by the sea.

No electricity.

No running water. Dirt floored.

Prayer,

wind & slapdash from the whereafter.