Epilogue: Teachers and Lovers (1967–1968)

It is, of course, a poem after all.
O after I am tired of the game
Of images of images, O I would
Move you into a turbulent speculation
With the stroke of eyes, the inappropriate question.
O mon semblable, let your ears flap wide;

I wish desirously to be the bride
Of one. I seemingly trust, as all about him
Lap wormwood tongues of friends. O womanish
He vanished; he is ill; and they say still
He loved them, with his equivocating mind
And bitterly. Such passions are not nice,

I shiver at their tenderest disguise:
The coverlet tendered as he sorely wept
For a baby’s death; or his own severed breath
Locking his teeth into a furious friend.
They are fast foes; he worries like a woman;
His heart hangs bottom-upward like a sloth

And takes with gravity the tendered limb.
Some of these images are courtesy of
A palsied teacher with tragic olive jowls
Mocking his students into filial tears.
“I think he only loves the world for him.”
Shakespeare goes down from Belmont into Venice

As pederast teachers file into the past.
My mind has circled, these six years, upon
The men’s room of a Y in Washington
Where the wry image of a handsome Frenchman
Eluded me at last. O tears of eleven,
This was the poetry of a vain virgin,
BATHROOM SONGS

Her passion all *With Lawrence in Arabia*;
Will you not weep; no no not weep, but ask
Curious questions? My slight friend the snake
Who rattles like an insincere magician
Has currant eyes and mocks me as he ropes
Around and round, like poems about poetry.

He brushes from my cheek a puzzled tear
But will not love me as he does the corn
Silken hair of a grave and pickle-faced freshman.
O Socrates, I would be your Athens now,
Or God’s Jerusalem! Men are for men, and poems
For poetry. She stopped, and shook her hair,

Having moved her mind to verses to make you read.