

Three Students, Bearing Gifts

Be mery and not sad;/ of myrth is oure
sang.

. . . Prophetys haue spokyn:
To so poore as we ar/ that he wold appere,
Fyrst fynd, and declare/ by his messyngere.
The Second Shepherds' Play,
Towneley cycle

In parka, GI jacket, split-tail tweed,
the shepherds come to usher in Noel.
The Towneley rustics donned no gayer garb
to wrap their cherries, bird, and tennis ball.

I spread potato chips and cokes as foils
to college fare, detach the holly seal
while half afraid that I should muff my cue
and tremble like a lover or a fool.

A super-grain Kaywoodie, and pre-smoked,
a Ronson—never fails, and balks the wind,
a shirt, monsignor red, for partying:
their trinity of splendor burns my hand.

December lowers, and I light a lamp
much in the way I would switch on a star,
but no one-hundred-fifty watts will tell
that it is I who am the wanderer.

Though sky and cloud are voicing bitterness
against the outside (or the inside) wall,
we chat of bowling scores, of ski jumps
cleared,
the softball future, Shakespeare's staring
owl.

And thanks for all your presents, merry
men;
pull up your monk's hood, Jim—that sleet
is wild.
I'll bask in flame of lighter, pipe, and shirt
(but not until I find, and gift, the Child).

RAYMOND ROSELIER