

**David W. Ullrich**

**In Memory of Giles Perkins**

As far as I could  
tell, his husbandry greened true,  
no goatman he. Kind

father, soccer coach,  
liberal. He'd dole out dough,  
no questions asked, and

die. Pancreatic  
spreads like syllables in this  
poem. Good man, bad hand

dealt by no one. His  
wife will never remarry.  
She lives, laughs at times,

loves her three children.  
I sit in chemo, plowing  
eleven years of

turf, farmer of words —  
threadless needles, poison drips —  
guilty, glad, alive.

### Portrait of John Cheever

A man can play so  
many parts, roles, he loses  
himself: gentleman,

writer, husband, drunk,  
father. What compelled him to  
suck so many men,

fuck women? Veneer  
and booze, so soothing, scabbled  
his life, not his pen.

Mary knew. Tethered  
to Winternitz, she became  
an accomplice, friend

in loneliness, love  
lasting til death's gaping maw.  
Brotherly secrets

clandestine. Rough house.  
Unutterable passion,  
intimacy. John,

Ossining's town squire,  
(New York City's philanderer  
flaneur). His burdens,

massive clouds, hard ice  
melting in whisky, as he  
melted when co-eds

gawked at his basset-  
sad face. He'd smile. Sure, he'd screw  
her, forget. Chekhov

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of the 'burbs, my ass.  
Yet, he fathered well, mothered  
them too. Short, shy, sly,

he made Susan, Ben,  
laugh, sing, tucked them in at night,  
spooned warmth, nestled dreams.

The mysteries of  
men lie in fictions, unkept  
beds, memories long

dead, and their children.