

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

John Drury: Three Poems

John Drury · Friday, September 18th, 2026

Elegy for People's Drug Store

A pharmacy without
a soda fountain
strikes me as a
church full of
confessionals but no
communion, not a
bite of wafer or taste
of wine to deepen
the tongue's faith.
No jukebox with its
parables of choice.

At lunch, a scruffy,
long-haired man sat
next to my revolving
stool and ordered a
cup of water and a
plate. No food. He
poured a mound of
ketchup from a
bottle and feasted
with a spoon. They
kicked him out. I
wish I'd been the
counterman and
brought him chili
and a slice of bread,
nothing extravagant,
enough to say
*Brother, if you're
that hungry, it's on
me.* I wish I'd

thought of doing it myself.

*

The Gas Leak

Mrs. McKenzie, the resident manager, knocked on the door to the apartment shared by my mother and her partner. “Bobby,” she said, “you and Carolyn have to leave right away. The police have ordered us to evacuate the building. There’s a gas leak, and it might blow up any minute.” My mother heard the news as *The building’s going to explode!*

“Carolyn’s not here, thank God,” my mother said. “Mimi, what am I going to do?”

“Gather your treasures, whatever you want to save, and carry them outside. The rescue squad is on the way. Hurry! You’ve got five minutes.”

It looked like a flea market in the parking lot. Residents had carried out

televisions, stereos,
easy chairs, vases,
photograph albums,
whatever valuables
they could lug down
the stairs. They
milled around, as
bewildered as
refugees, hearing the
sirens approach.

My mother looked
around her
apartment at the
gilded mirrors, the
crystal ornaments,
the land grant signed
by Lord Calvert, the
boxes of silverware,
the framed paintings
of her ancestors, the
cloisonné jar where
she wanted her ashes
deposited when she
died, the history of
her family in the
form of belongings,
legacies, property,
possessions, and
obligations. Then
she left empty-
handed.

*

Happy Hour at Pancho's Fly Inn

after *The Right Stuff*, both the book by Tom Wolfe
and the movie by Philip Kaufman

They're here to drink their nerves back down to earth
in this firetrap of a stick-and-rudder bar—
hotshot flyboys lounging underneath
a wall of photographs (pilots no more—

those faces under helmets crashed and burned).
They need a tall cool one. They need to fly
and break all barriers, their records earned
by staring Mr. Death down from the sky.

They squeeze into a rocket, the X-1,
carried beneath a bomber's belly, dropped
into thin air, then surging up alone
to the stratosphere until the envelope's ripped.

Why shouldn't they get drunk and howl like wolves,
trapped in the cockpit of their ravenous lives?

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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