

DAVID WAGONER

In the Penny Arcade, 1931

At the top of that machine
 When I let my pennies go
 Through a slot they went falling
Of their own weight along
 A vertical maze this way
 And that through a thicket
Of brass nails past my nose
 Against the blurry glass
 By the numbers that showed how
Fast they might multiply
 If only they took the right
 Crooked paths to the end
Where I would have nothing left
 To show for them or to show
 My father how little
I'd made of them after
 He'd let them drop
 Reluctantly one by one
Into my cupped hands
 Almost as carefully
 As they'd been dropped into his
From somewhere above us both
 In those hard times and now
 Were neither his nor mine.