

Glenn Stowell

I graduated from Phillips Andover in June of 2009. During my time there I had the privilege to study under Mr. Bill Lychack, the writer-in-residence. I enrolled in a poetry course that he taught – and as a result, I tried my hand at writing fiction. I read Bill Lychack's *Wasp Eater* and was blown away by its brevity, clarity, and depiction of childhood. In that vein, I read William Maxwell's *So Long, See You Tomorrow*. I believe that has impacted me even more so than Bill's novella. *So Long, See You Tomorrow* was everything I wished I could do; it was stunning; there is almost no dialogue, as the story's narrator uses his tired mind to piece back together events that unfolded in his youth. I have given that book as a gift to various people, and in describing it the verb I use most often is "ache." Whether it is the aching of the aging author, recounting painful elements in his past, or whether it is my own aching, seeing undeniable parallels to my own life inside the book, I will never know.

In a biography I read, I learned that Maxwell stayed at Harvard for a year where he became close friends with Robert Fitzgerald, a sophomore. Maxwell said that Fitzgerald convinced him that there was an inevitable, aching sadness in life, that we're running towards nothing, and losing friends all the while. I read a sentence in *So Long, See You Tomorrow* that almost exactly mirrored these sentiments: "If they hadn't disappeared then, they would have on some other occasion, life being, as Ortega y Gasset somewhere remarks, in itself and forever shipwreck." Fitzgerald became very good friends with Dudley Fitts (in fact, the two would go on to produce many acclaimed translations of Greek works). At Andover, I learned that these folks I read so much about (and so much of their work, for that matter) were all around me. Fitzgerald kept correspondence with one of my teachers, Fitts was himself a professor at Andover, and Maxwell was Mr. Lychack's mentor. To be in a place with so much history was certainly inspiring. I've also enjoyed Maxwell's *They Came Like Swallows*, Rothschild's *Wondermonger* and *Rhapsody of a Hermit*, Baxter's *Feast of Love*, Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, and Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*. In the realm of poetry, I enjoy very much the work of Li-Young Lee, James Arlington Wright, Williams Carlos Williams, (going a little farther back) D.H. Lawrence.