



**J**ames Magner, Jr. was born in 1928 in New York City. He served as an enlisted man in the army from 1948 to 1951, including service as an infantryman in Korea in 1950 and 1951, where he was severely wounded. After his discharge in 1951, he spent five years in a Roman Catholic monastery before returning to secular life and earning a BA in philosophy from Duquesne University, and MA and PhD degrees in English from the University of Pittsburgh. Since 1962, he has taught modern poetry, American literature, literary criticism and creative writing at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Magner's poetry has appeared in such journals as *America*, *College English*, *The Christian Century*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Illinois Quarterly*, *The Mediterranean Review* and *New England Review*, and has been anthologized in *60 on the 60's* and *The Cleveland Anthology*, among others. He has received an Ohio Poet of the Year Award, the Hart Crane Memorial Award, and a special commendation for poetic achievement from the Ohio House of Representatives. His books and chapbooks include:

*Toiler of the Sea*, Frankestown, NH: Golden Quill Press, 1965.

*Although There Is the Night*, Frankestown, NH: Golden Quill Press, 1968.

*Gethsemane*, Brooklyn Heights, OH: Poetry Seminar Press, 1969.

*John Crowe Ransom: Critical Principles and Preoccupations*, New York: Mouton & Company, 1971.

*The Dark Is Closest to the Moon*, Cleveland: Ryder Press, 1973.

*The Women of the Golden Horn*, Cleveland: Ryder Press, 1976.

*To Whom You Shall Go*, Francestown, NH:

Golden Quill Press, 1978.

*Till No Light Leaps*, Francestown, NH: Golden Quill Press,  
1981.

*Rose of My Flowering Night*, Francestown, NH:

Golden Quill Press, 1985.

*The Temple of the Bell of Silence*, Creston, OH: Fred Press,  
1992.

*Only the Shadow of the Great Fool*, Cleveland OH:

Blue Flamingo Productions, 1996.

**Elegy for the Valiant Dead**  
(Dedicated to J.R.R. Tolkien)

*“Let the bier be ready, quickly made  
When out we come and bear our lord, man beloved  
To where long he shall bide in the shelter of the  
sovereign God”*

Glory ends in night,  
and therefore shall we bend  
with dark and brooding piety  
to the bedded dust  
of brothers who shared our glory  
that moved in the arc of distant night  
and is forever gone;  
the eyes of night go out  
and are blind of men;  
therefore do I bend,  
do I think on the great host  
that has gone before  
and fought like gods  
monsters upon the walls of world.  
Therefore do I plead  
that those who've gone before  
may be wrapped in the quilt of Thy arms of night  
—a fitting ring for flesh  
that fought the demon acolyte  
(who swung the lamp of God,  
upon the fields of time,  
upon the arc of world)  
with puny helmets of bone:  
upon the threshold of worlds  
which had no names for them,  
worlds whose Principalities

gripped them like putty  
in Polyphemus' grasp.  
-Flesh! scoring no body with embedded mace,  
piercing no fleshly heart,  
nor ripping the spirit-lock  
that fastened upon their mortal pulse  
-tenuous as a flickering flame  
held to a billows breath.  
Therefore do I bend  
to those who struggled in the night;  
whose folly and whose glory  
was their slaughter in the night;  
therefore do I grieve in hope  
that their outward dooms  
light lamps of inward victory  
in a kingdom of no swords  
and the kingly kiss of peace.

## **The Man Without a Face**

Gutted, tangled – sprawled like a broken crab,  
Glorious in enstillment, in encrusted crucified  
entanglement.

Near-dust now, but sometime alive in night-fires  
of high-men's thoughts.

He, dead and alone in his body,  
Seaweed shredded upon assaulted wire;  
without a face.

Far from the reach of our hands,  
Entombed in the heart of our mind,  
Victorious in forward sprawl;  
One of those who fought.

## Christ of Battle

Christ of the battle-field

Take them in your sinewed arms,  
Press their bloodied death-dent brows  
with God-human cheek.

In their numbed-black minds and legs they cannot  
feel

they forget to long,  
only know to die.

I remember deep my friend, my burly Marsh,  
his head cleaved through.

Did you speak silent-soft to him  
Just before they blazed him to somewhere  
away from here?

Speak softly to each of us,  
alert in our graves.

Gently O God, no one so much as we  
— soldier-sinners —  
need gentleness.

Speak Crucified – your victory is of transcendent  
battleground

And crucific, stormed a strength angelic;

Human-God – only Hero of mine

-You are the hero in all of us,

You are the heart that is steeled in all of us:.

Across rigid seas of froze-stung ridges

Was I born upon invisible shoulders

While I sigh-groaned Your name;

Many a foot-trod was lifted, and bent the shot-stiff  
knee.

Many a finger on one's own trigger  
to give one's own wound,

Did You hold, unreleased,  
to mold brave men.  
Christ-God carry me over the froze-vast bleakness  
of long life's plain  
-so vast, so frozen—so unending.  
As then, Christ-God, carry me  
across your sinewed-spirit shoulders  
-it was by sinew you gave me life  
-it is by spirit you comfort me.  
Christ-God carry me!  
give hope in storm-mud and grave-bed,  
Christ-God teach low and soft  
like heavy-falling mist upon the mind  
As then, when mist enshrouded helmet  
and we were alone,  
and one.  
And in the end, look not for bravery  
for there is none  
But only have mercy, my Christ, my God  
carry me  
-I will bend the shot-stiff knee.



## Zero Minus One Minute

The dawn has come  
to sleepless night  
again  
and it is time for us to answer  
from the gray, crystal holes  
that seem to womb  
just northern night and nothingness;  
but we are there;  
our eyes electric,  
our bodies splinters  
in bundled rags;  
we are there  
and we shall creak  
our frozen bones  
upon that crystal mount  
that looms in silence  
and amaze the world.

There is no sound  
and the world doubts  
that we exist  
—that we will creak  
like brittle crabs  
upon that skull,  
consummate mount,  
into the very hollow of its eyes  
that will flash us death  
or simply stare us life  
and frozen day  
again.

## To a Chinaman, in a Hole, Long Ago

Does that long-alone matron dream  
that this, her bed-warm love,  
so sleeps – self-graved, ice-wombed  
amid the cornstalk stubble  
of the appalling distance  
on the frozen face of day?  
O father of your people  
in some smoking hut in China  
in which hunch the moon-faced children  
of your still-now steely dreams,  
I, your ordered searcher  
with a killer on my sling,  
do bequeath my life to you  
that you might fly the Yellow Sea  
to your startled matron's arms  
and curl beholden  
amid the pygmies of your loins.  
But marbled you lie  
— and I, somewhat alive —  
this rock-white silent day  
of our demagogue damnation.

## Soldier of the Night

I am the soldier of the night.  
Alone along the fields of night,  
blind the moon in palling white,  
outstep the dark into the dawn  
if the dawn exists,  
for the stepping is the life  
transcendent of the dark and white,  
no house, no lamp, no chimney curl  
but only life outstripping night.  
My striving is my God  
and to his deep I look in dark  
and through the simple eye of sight  
do I drink my stepping might.  
I am the soldier of the night,  
alone along the fields of white  
I move on stumping unfelt feet  
toward the mountained silent sentinels  
that loom their jagged horns upright  
to gore the dark and blinded moon  
that broods its lonely wound of sight  
on frozen plains  
of all our mortal longing plight.

## Repository

*"Be one on whom nothing is lost"*

A reader asked  
The Sportsline  
what college quarterback  
named Adam  
died  
in The Korean War.  
No record.  
Even from the army and alma mater.

I remember an evening,  
lit by lantern of a tent  
in Jimungi of Kyushu,  
before we sailed from Sasebo,  
a second in silence  
thirty-two years ago  
in hills above Beppu  
(strange, that I retain the face  
of a man I never knew;  
perhaps, in the secret of things,  
a gift of him to you.)

I remember  
a tall dark quick body,  
alert dark-eyed gaze  
(How can I see, now, so clearly!)  
above his golden bars  
caught in lantern  
and the shadows

of what was to be  
his austered and steely way  
to memory.

Impossible to mind, impossible to heart  
that one so quick,  
who stepped so quick  
in pocket  
and rifled passes forty yards  
for alma mater and the infantry  
could die  
and be forgotten  
(even by his academy)  
by all except me  
who see  
his face still,  
dark eyes, dark hair – dark God  
who disappeared  
with him.  
(How does heart, do eyes remember?)

Vanesca!

(Do I spell his name correctly?)

Vanesca!

(I say it again, so someone will remember.)

Vanesca!

(What is this repository that keeps the names,  
the souls of men!)

## **The Prayer of the Former Infantryman**

One  
thing  
I  
know.  
The  
Ground  
Is  
My  
Friend.

## **Instruction**

Take  
the quintessential  
hawk  
and demagogue  
out upon the plains  
and whisper to him,  
handing him  
his entrenching tool,  
"Till spring:"

All  
wars  
would  
end.