

TOM LUHRMANN

WINTER NIHILISM

In the winter months of jogging
only three things stood out boldly
in relief:
a pale blue tugboat
emerging slowly from the fog;
an empty school bus standing opposite Grant's Tomb;
and a small, private garden
between the railroad yard and a rotting pier
in which there were some gardening tools,
an American flag,
and bricks that had been painted white.

I wondered what they meant.
Then you, who had not seen them,
received the following, unsigned note:

"The tugboat and the school bus
are objects of transitory wonder.
They will tell you nothing more about your destiny
than the letters you found,
written by a child on the dust of a window pane,
in the summer house you rented in Vermont.

"The objects in the garden, though,
are of a different order.
Remember them.
The white bricks will sustain you
when everything seems meaningless;
the gardening tools will take you further
than any ideology;
the flag will stand between you and despair."