

Patrick White / BILL

all good married couples like bad habits
gone to bed, he could remember three wives
that had forgotten him. he didn't need
your pity. thirty chihuahuas, twelve cats,
all the company he wanted he had,
and it would be wrong to laugh. cold nights
he'd brown-paper a bottle of bourbon
and walk down to Johnson Street Bridge,
his breath a little fog he'd been lost in
for sixty-two years. black water beneath him
('one needs to be reminded of the choice sometimes')
he would look for the baby pigeons
that were always falling from their nests
among the girders. a foolish man, perhaps,
but kind. two years ago one of his wives
and a son with a strong sense of propriety
threw his ashes off the bridge just as he
had requested. who knows what was concluded? —
the baby pigeons have been dying ever since.