

## Peter Viereck (1916-2006)

Peter Viereck was born in New York City in 1916. He died on May 13, 2006, at the age of 89 in South Hadley, Massachusetts, in the same house on the edge of the Mount Holyoke College campus where he and his family had lived since he started teaching at the College.

Viereck received his S.B. degree from Harvard *summa cum laude* in 1937. After graduate study at Oxford, he received his M.A. (1939) and Ph.D. (1942) at Harvard. He served in the Army in Africa and Italy during World War II. He taught briefly at Smith College and from 1948 and for the rest of his teaching career at Mount Holyoke College. He held the William R. Kenan, Jr., Chair of History. He was a legendary teacher and campus presence. He received the Pulitzer Prize in 1949 for his first book of poems, *Terror and Decorum*, and a number of other awards for poetry. He may be the only American scholar to have received Guggenheim Fellowships in both poetry and history. His prose works include *Metapolitics*, *Conseroatism Revisited*, and *The Unadjusted Man*. His most recent poetry books are *Strict Wildness* and *Door*.

Peter Viereck was a member of the Editorial Board of *Humanitas* and published both prose and poetry in its pages. His poem "Line Against Circle" appeared in the Fall 1992/Winter 1993 issue, which inaugurated the journal's present format. His poem "Straighteners" was published in Vol. VII, No. 1 (1994). Vol. X, No. 2 (1997) contains what Viereck, already in fragile health, expected to be his last major poem, "Gate Talk for Brodsky." Joseph Brodsky, the Nobel-Prize winning poet, had died in 1996. Viereck had helped bring him to Mount Holyoke, and they had become close friends. Viereck's article "Metapolitics Revisited" in Vol. XVI, No. 2 (2003) later served as the foreword for the current, Transaction edition of *Metapolitics*.

In October of 2006 Mount Holyoke College sponsored a memorial symposium on Viereck, whose prime mover was Joseph Ellis, a faculty member there. The invited speakers included Dana Gioia, Irving Louis Horowitz, Michael Lind, Claes Ryn, co-editor of *Humanitas*, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

The two poems by Peter Viereck that are published in this issue were written in 2005 and were offered to *Humanitas* by his son and daughter. The article on Peter Viereck's works of prose is based on Claes Ryn's lecture at the mentioned memorial conference.