

HUMOR



George Drew

Apparently Someone in the Department (2004)

SUBJECT: A CERTAIN DEAD WHITE POET (MALE)

FROM: Vera Slattjam

Apparently someone in the department has assigned Robert Frost. If you, would you let me know? For your sake, and that of your students, I hope it isn't "stopping by" those woods again, isn't the usual milieu-driven mood manipulation – the dark, the frozen lake, snow falling, that man in his sled. Why not radically reinvent the man as a Calvinist with murder on his mind? Maybe a laconic Vermonter, maybe you. How about an allegory? In this scenario what's murdered is the classics – known, in prehistoric times, as the canon. Pound's no problem, nor Hart Crane, nor Robinson, Stevens, Cummings and others of his kind, and certainly not Williams, not Eliot – Thomas Stearns, that is. But *Robert Frost?* *That* granite-tongued bundle of testosterone? How about someone somewhat more obscure? Say J. V. Cunningham, or Weldon Kees? Or someone British, far away from this? George Darley, for example. Or John Clare, who didn't know whose woods they were

and didn't care. Who plowed ahead,
no more constrained by promises than Faust.
Madness is a quite acceptable excuse,
but your syllabus is due today – revised.
Frost doesn't belong in Freshman English II.

Cheers,

Vera