

1960

## American Gothic

Gerald Ivan Locklin  
*St. John Fisher College*

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# American Gothic

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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I saw it hanging there on the wall  
And I grimaced  
And convoluted like a pricked balloon  
My stomach shrank  
His indiscriminate pitchfork  
Taunted man  
Spat on woman

He looked right down along the  
Length of his nose  
At the world  
Before my eyes his wife vanished;  
He didn't notice.  
Maybe she had been assimilated  
Into his veins and flowed there  
Hating.

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I went home, went to bed  
And dreamed I could see  
Him, frowning at Christ  
Hanging on the other wall for  
Giving a bad impression.  
There he was, slashing away  
At Caesar's back to  
Punish his adulteries.  
And no sooner had that sacred libation  
Nourished our earth than  
He was up on the funeral pyre  
Pouring vengeance into the  
Lent, bent Roman ears.

In our time, he was burning  
Books and films, instead of witches.  
He had parents believing  
Orphan Annie twice the sinner that  
Joan of Arc was.  
And he was rowing his boat  
Through atom bomb tests, and writing  
"Letters to the Editor" and  
He was dead set on stamping out  
Every sin and sinner in the world.  
And I wondered when the sinners  
Would gang up on him  
And bring our own  
Corrupt, compatible, comfortable  
Peace back to earth.