


HONORS THESIS DESCRIPTION

Department of English

CITY SONGS: A LEWISTON MISCELLANY

Whether or not Lewiston is a lively city seems to be a point in debate, but that it is, in its own way, very much alive is beyond question. Since its beginnings on the bank of the Androscoggin in 1770 it has led a colorful life, even if today its predominant hue seems grey. Whatever its present state, it has, along with its history, like every place on earth, much that is worthy of observation and response. My senior thesis is a creative project that will express many of my personal reactions to the Lewiston experience, an experience that demands a voice and likewise demands an ear. Consisting mainly of a collection of original poems more or less centered on and around the distinctive life of Lewiston, it will offer responses to what I have witnessed and imagined as I have opened myself to the city's particular offerings. Experimenting in a number of different voices and styles, I intend to present a variety of poems that will hopefully give expression to the characters, places, and culture that uniquely belong to Lewiston, as well as to some of the thoughts they can evoke. In doing so I hope to lend voice to at least a part of the novelty of Lewiston I have been watching, living, and singing as I continue to practice my craft.

  
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THESIS--Some organizational ideas...

Series of lyric poems, of as many types and styles as possible,  
organized by theme, for instance:

SECTIONS (POSSIBLE)

Imitations or parodies of other poets--Poets Visit Lewiston or  
some such title

Neighbors Section--poems about outlying regions and towns

A section devoted to a short series of poems involving one  
character or set of characters

Street, or Building, Section--series of poems, each about a certain  
characteristic building or street

Marsden Hartley Section

People Section--each poem about a person, like many of the Tilbury poems

Place Development--series about the chronological development  
(in either direction) of a certain place visited each week  
throughout the year

Historical Section--poems derived from Lewiston's history

A section devoted to one long "epic"-ish poem

Etc...

*"Lewiston in Verse" - could use poems*

## ORGANIZATION

### Sections

Lewiston in Rare Form

Writers Visit Lewiston

Place Development Section

Character Exploit Section

Historical Section

Place Section

Street Section

Bar Section

People Section

different characters

real and imagined

many sketches

A Sub-Epic--separate section

Found Poems Section

newspaper

signs

posters

Bates Section

Introduction--personal essay

Essay Section

on Lewiston

on poetry/art

on other things

Humor Section

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF PROJECTED SENIOR THESIS

As things seem to be standing now, I continue in my hopes to produce a creative thesis as a candidate for departmental honors. The thesis will be a creative one, a series of poems rounded out with other "creative" writing to be explained, insofar as that is possible now, below. Feeling the need in myself, and sensing, I think, its usefulness, I have decided to build this series around a particular theme or topic. The theme I chose, or choose as the case still is, is one with which I have been enthralled for some time, a topic which awes me, draws my attention in so many ways, and pulls me toward it by such a variety of attractions that I find it impossible to avoid: the city of Lewiston.

Lewiston has, since I came here as a freshman, established itself as a force in my life somewhat beyond the town my college happens to have been founded in. It speaks to me differently, more intensely; or, I should say, I must listen more attentively than do others. I guess that sounds rather elitist (a mistake in this City) but I do think, in some way, my attention to this city differs in kind from the attention afforded by others. I find it irresistibly alive, and its life is one I respond to.

These responses vary. Lewiston is Lewiston, that is my basic premise, and admitting that obviously brings to bear a number of realities one must come to terms with. My responses, my terms, my sensibilities dictate a number of separate realizations about the character and importance of this city. I am not blind to the sham and the cultural poverty and the economic nightmares that can characterize Lewiston; at the same time I can still

assert its vitality, its joys and victories, the vibrations of its people and activity. Lewiston for me is a strange place, but a beautiful one, a place full of opposites and paradoxes. Following Blake's cue, I find in the contrasts, the contraries, of Lewiston much to be creative about. That creativity I hope to couple with my own sensitivities and senses to produce a series of poems that will give voice to this city as well as to myself.

The poems will be of various sorts. At this point in my life, and ever since I can remember, I am preoccupied with experimentation. Preoccupations of any sort may be detrimental to the aspiring writer, but I feel mine to be a healthy one in this part of the game. I entertain the hopes of presenting in the confines of this thesis a great many different styles and voices, all undoubtedly marked by my own tenuous style and voice. I feel strongly the idea that to learn one must do, and in some sense I want to "do" as much poetry as I can. To this end, I would like to use my thesis as a massive vehicle to "do" as much as I possibly can.

What I plan on doing is this: to put in words my experience of Lewiston Maine, and to make those words as various and colorful and as rich and contrasting as has been the experience itself. This entails a wide variety of moods and voices, a splendour of form and a drama of differing contents, and the active thought necessary to true experimentation. I realize from the start that all of this is just a starting point, that my poems will reflect only so much as I feel and there is more to feel than I have such far, and that they will not be of a quality worthy of altogether much attention. But my thesis I hope will become a source as well as a vessel of inspiration, that it will provide me the incentive and the opportunity to delve deeper into the life of the city and the life of my talent and thought.

I hope to include in the thesis a multiplicity of forms. It is one of my designs to incorporate into the thesis poems done in traditional forms, in the hopes to develop a degree of rapport with them. I plan also to model some of my poems after other writers, reflecting, I hope, some understanding of their technique and style and method of observation. I am also studying the "poetics" of some writers in an attempt first to learn more about poetry in general and poems in particular, but also to aid me in my own thoughts about poetry and art and their use and place in the world. The thesis will be of a roomy enough nature that I hope to include creative essays in addition to the poems. These essays will be about my own views of poetry and art, as well as about the city and its peculiar and particular life.

It is obvious at this point that the thesis is turning into a sort of hodgepodge of written ideas. It is my aim to organize the poems and essays in such a manner as to make the thesis both a coherent whole and a large selection of my writing. I have a tentative title that sticks in my mind, A Lewiston Miscellany. This suggests to me the vastly differing nature of the enclosed material, but also a unifying and distinctive principle or purpose. I know I run the risk of getting beyond myself and makeing the entire affair a sad diaspora of loose ideas. But I believe I can present a coherent and varied collection of works centered around (but not limited to) Lewiston and my perceptions of it.

The thesis is in its infancy. There will be much to change, lots to discard and add. As of yet there is little written besides all the writings I have accumulated since I first picked up a pen. This foundation, which looks like much more than it is due to the idiosyncratic refusal I have to throw anything I wirte away, is of course useful. I have been writing (if that's what one may call it) for five or six years, and half of them have been spent

in Lewiston. In a thesis of this nature, I think it acceptable to put in poems that do not expressly mention the city or its characters, since all thoughts, whether expressly about Lewiston or not, can be relevant. Therefore I plan on using some of that older stuff. I hope to review and revise (quite heavily in most instances) some older poems for inclusion in the thesis. The majority of poems I know will be new poems, poems written as I view from many sides the lives of this city. These will be organized in any of a number of ways--some ideas I have are a variety of sections devoted to certain aspects of the city. For instance, history poems, place developments, characters and their antics, a section about Lewiston's "neighbors," and perhaps even one very long (or longer, anyway) poem. The organization of course depends upon the eventual poems ready to be included. Miscellaneous poems will be collected and incorporated into the scheme somehow also. Whatever the organizational format, the thesis will be a collection of varying works centered at least loosely about the Lewiston experience. My inclinations toward certain aspects will doubtlessly be evident, but I hope the entire collection will show a certain degree of familiarity with poetry and the city, an observant eye, and at least a moderately tuned ear.

To this end my preparation thus far has been to read as many different sorts of poetry as I can, to study the poetics of a few authors, to continuously write poems of my own, and to enjoy and observe the peculiar life of the city. I also plan on reading things related to the city itself--its history, a book on French immigrants I procured, the newspapers, etc. Contact with the city and with the art are my highest priorities in these early stages. As far as writing goes, it seems to be slow now, but I know of the fickleness of the Muse so to speak. My greatest problem, personally, that I find in my own techniques is that I do not revise enough, if at all. The thesis I know will offer me the incentive to go back and revise and revitalize both old and new poems after giving

them a chance to breathe. With all the reading and study, the constant attention to the streets and the people and the PLACE, the writing and soon the revising, I hope, at least in some small way, to bring to the pages of my thesis some taste of Lewiston, some taste of myself, and insofar as I can to produce a work of uniform and successful, if not good, quality.

DH

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Sept 14, 1982

- Looking for this in the ground - person abstract;
- as "ground statement" - what is the shape, length
- & the tone at low sounds "along" (word in)?
- What about the personality of the "voice" then  
It may create?
- The appeal of writing is graphic, imagetic,  
of beats & the sources
- the delay in material of it; // dit. see "sources" /  
Section: 17

City Songs: A Lewiston Miscellany

An Honors Thesis

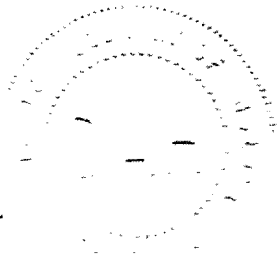
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of English  
Bates College

in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts

by

Donald Arthur Harrington

Lewiston, Maine  
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## CITY SONGS: A LEWISTON MISCELLANY

## INTRODUCTION

It may be argued that Lewiston is not what most people would call a lively city. Beset with a plague of infirmities, it is a city beyond its prime, filled with decrepit buildings and people afloat in a sea of minor misfortunes. But in spite of its veneer of decay and despair, at its heart it is a city very much alive, alive with the endeavors of women and children and men to be women and children and men. Its apparent failure as a healthy city is redeemed by the success of its inhabitants in being inhabitants. The life of a city is dependent only upon the life of the people within it, and in this sense Lewiston flourishes, perhaps not with the splendor of a garden of roses, but at least with the blossoming of innumerable flowers in the cracks of all its sidewalks.

It has been my endeavor first to appreciate and then to express the particular and peculiar life that is Lewiston's. I imagine I have succeeded more fully in the former activity, but this collection of poems is at the least a thorough attempt to grant Lewiston the expression it often lacks. Despite the seeming squalor apparent in this city, a mill town deprived of its mills and left to face modernity with acres of tenements and a polluted river, I find it harbors on its streets and within its walls much that is worthy of celebration. Although the apparent squalor is in fact real, it does not preclude the activity of other forces, the praiseworthy desires and attempts of the people to make the best of the place. It is this secret life that gives Lewiston the cause to be. Since its founding on the banks of the Androscoggin River in 1770 it has led a colorful life, even if today its predominant hue seems grey. Despite its outward lack of liveliness, Lewiston is characterized by a life of active endeavor in the face of passive decay. It is this activity that lends it its vibrancy and voice, and to become full and productive that voice needs little else than a listening ear.

It is that that I have attempted to provide. I hold the belief that given enough attention any person or place can offer a myriad messages worth the waiting. I have walked through Lewiston and waited for it to speak, opened my eyes and ears and heart to the place and its people, and it has indeed spoken. What I have heard I have tried to pass on in these poems. To a great degree it is

Lewiston, not I, that has written these poems. They offer a series of insights and reactions born in the city itself, and only shaped by me. I have played the role of the Eolian harp and allowed the wind from the river and city streets to play its own music, songs that are sometimes happy and often sad, that voice the symptoms of despair and the search for the cure. These poems are songs that try to approximate in some way and to differing degrees the music that originates in the life and dying of the city itself. As all art is artifice, they cannot offer the reality, for the true music is available only where the notes arise, in the streets and buildings, on the faces and in the sad and happy hearts, but I hope they succeed in some sense to amplify and refine that true music in their rhythm and phrases. My poems hopefully give voice to some of the music that is lost in the larger voice of Lewiston itself, music that is there for the listening but often overlooked.

Any poem suggested by, or written in or about, Lewiston is, of course, a "Lewiston poem." This collection of Lewiston poems is composed, for the most part, of recent pieces written expressly with Lewiston and many of its aspects in mind. They were written with an open heart and an open mind, and therefore reflect a certain degree of honesty characterised by an expression of the hollow despair prevalent in the city. I fear this expression may at times overpower the equally valid and present joy found in the lives of many of the people and places. This joy is necessarily colored by the poverty and predicaments so many of these people face, but it is nonetheless there. Some of these songs are happy songs that strive to voice that joy. Others are given to sing of the sadness and loneliness. I know I have not, indeed never could have, expressed all the elements and emotions of Lewiston life. But in my life and work here I have tried to open myself to all that Lewiston offers, letting the city itself with the voice it must, in the end, speak with. To that larger voice I have added aspects of my own, and the poems collected here give voice to many of the songs Lewiston sings to me. These poems, these city songs, have hopefully captured some of the spirit and voice of this marvelous happy and sad city, and again hopefully have let them go free.

CITY SONGS:

A LEWISTON MISCELLANY

To speak in a flat voice  
Is all that I can do....

Then I returned rebuffed  
And saw under the sun  
The race not to the swift  
Nor the battle won.  
Liston dives in the tank,  
Lord, in Lewiston, Maine,  
And Ernie Doty's drunk  
In Hell again....

James Wright, "Speak"

I admire my native city because  
it is a part of the secret rite  
of love of place....  
the harsh grinding of the mills rang in  
my ears for years - and a sordid sort of music  
came out of it....

Marsden Hartley, "Lewiston Is  
a Pleasant Place"

Because I know that time is always time  
And place is always and only place  
And what is actual is actual only for one time  
And only for one place  
I rejoice that things are as they are...

T.S. Eliot, "Ash-Wednesday"

JOHN 1:14

the opening  
of the book

a sacrament  
of failure

litany  
of the demise

of form  
and content

the folly  
of the wise

but such is the cost  
of wisdom

the sacrifice  
of fools

to open a book  
and behold

scattered  
and lonely

only words  
and words only

## THE BEGINNING

Let us begin at the beginning  
and speak of things to come.  
Notice the moment  
is father of eternity.  
We see seconds only as illegitimate children.  
How it is that we can't see  
the very beginning was the beginning of the end  
I cannot know.  
No one cares besides.  
We fall in love with instants  
we proceed to ignore,  
neglecting especially their ancestries.  
The time will come.  
The rape of the clock is inherent  
in the living of life.  
For each of us  
there is an instant  
wherein we realize our marriage to time,  
and know that all must share her.  
The universal adulteress,  
nursemaid to each of us,  
vicious lover too honest with all.  
Let us begin at the end and start again  
and speak of things that came.

## GIVING IT ALL A VOICE

There are things need be said.  
 Across the river, over the rock  
     of the falls,  
 Sableman Plastic Heel Co.  
 stands as a monolith,  
     primitive culture  
     unsung.  
 The blank eyes of the filled-in windows  
     have a wish,  
     want  
 to sing. No voice.

Semaphor of the smokestacks seems to say:  
 You may pass me; but I've something to say.  
 In the mortar of this heart is a message;  
 more than shoes, there are lives,  
 loves among this machinery, some feeling  
 in these presses and drills.  
 You who pass must wonder  
 and acknowledge with the gulls and the trains  
 my song. Blues, or the concerto of plastics,  
 there are here, within me, around  
 me, entire operas worthy  
 of your ear.

And I listen.  
 And in listening I give it  
     a voice.  
 I hear besides the hum of the molds and the presses  
     its song.  
 The music of the men behind the machines.  
 I listen and I give it all  
     a voice.

## ALREADY

Already they seem to be saying  
they need somebody  
to watch  
to take note  
to sing in some small way  
their small lives  
meaningful lives crammed into tenements  
expressed by waving lingerie  
on the line from the window to the garage  
lives of coffee cups  
of morning papers never read  
used only as kindling  
or to put under the leak  
in the toilet

already they speak to me  
from sidewalks and variety store steps  
from baby carriages and old bicycles  
and they seem to be saying  
they need somebody to see

there are many reasons  
for many songs  
and many notes to be heard  
and recorded  
there are birdsongs  
and organ music from the cathedral  
and guitars on front porches  
but no minstrel will tackle  
the ballads of these streets  
of these feet constantly treading  
the weary gravel paths  
from the side doors to the curb  
where buses and motorcycles pass  
leaving the breath of familiar poor air

continued...

they seem to be saying  
come watch us  
see us  
as we walk with our respective limps  
hear us  
calling for our children  
feel us  
course the veins of our city  
rushing to the heart  
of what others call life  
what others  
never know  
watch us, and I will watch  
I will sing  
perhaps never triumphant  
perhaps never true  
but with a hum and occasional whistle  
watching, taking note, hoping I say  
what I seem to be saying  
already.

## THIS CITY IT SINGS

sings in voices from back stoops  
 the praises of drying laundry  
     on the lines  
 celebrations  
     of streetlights  
 sighing timbers of tenement rafters  
     creaking a hallelulah

sings the rosary of traffic jams  
     aria for airplane and bus  
 crescendo of the river  
 harmony  
     for bridge and streetsounds  
 coda  
     to the tree in Kennedy Park

sings in the sweat of millworkers  
 the ring of the register in the corner store  
 staccato of unfolding umbrellas  
     keeping the time with high-heels

schoolchildren sing at jumprope  
 tea-pots whistle  
     the cackle of birds  
 all sounds of the city, the voice  
     of the city, a song,  
 a happy song of immeasurable measures,  
     surprise endings,  
 a snappy beat, the tempo  
     of the days keeping time,  
 each bar on the street  
     a bar in the opera,  
 the song,  
 the pretty song of the city,  
     the song the city sings

this city  
     it sings

## STOPPING TO GAZE

at buildings  
at flowers  
at people  
stopping to remember  
their worth  
their color  
their faces  
they show us  
how to see  
how to say  
how to sing  
in this city  
few can sing about  
in this city  
of old roads  
old lives  
old meanings  
stopping to gaze  
pausing to realize  
the nature  
of the history  
of unfolding  
the life  
of the underlying expression  
in the things  
that we stop  
to gaze at

## LINCOLN STREET: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

Lincoln Street,  
     a place.  
 Place  
     is important,  
         place  
 is second  
     only to  
         people  
 and people are  
     second to  
 none.

    In this place  
         the people  
 are playing their games,  
     some  
         with pencils,  
     others  
         with wrenches,  
 still others  
     in paper bags.

Children  
     being serious  
         grow up,  
 old men  
     on the bridge  
         become children again,  
 staring  
     into the stream,  
         up the street,  
 the buildings  
     falling slowly  
         to the sidewalk,  
 age  
     summed up  
         in the windows.

The beauty  
     is in the way  
         they walk  
 to their lives  
     on slow feet,  
 how they follow  
     their opinions  
         with the fact  
 of exhaustion.

continued...

In a world  
of tiresome  
poverty  
there can only be  
two joys.  
Escape is impossible  
for some;  
others  
find a way  
to like it,  
bless  
with their lives  
their lots,  
make dignity  
into small packages  
they can tuck  
underneath  
their arms.  
This man  
runs a hardware store,  
censes  
the showroom  
with old cigars.  
One woman  
spends her days  
watching  
the bakery windows.  
Important is that each  
has his place,  
a place  
in the life  
of the street,  
the street itself  
a place  
with a life if its own.  
People become  
the sole virtue,  
the beauty  
of a corner  
with two streetlights  
and one small bridge  
behind the canal.

## MAIN STREET

this street  
with one name  
this street  
with many faces

this street that can remember  
the horses  
the footsteps  
the years of traversing  
with bundles under arms  
briefcases full of secrets  
lolli-pops held tight  
in small hands

this street  
is the arbiter  
of a thousand  
directions  
this street  
the mainstay  
of the life  
of the heart  
of the city

one name  
naming all  
many faces  
facing the life  
of this town

this street  
the main metaphor  
of the ground

## WALT WHITMAN VISITS LEWISTON, MAINE

I am with them, the ambulances draw near, I am there, I have seen  
     the staircase, I felt the fall,  
 I am with them too, the lovers, by the falls, under those trees  
     and the river nearby, the sounds mingling with their own,  
 And with the mothers sending children to school, first day, packing  
     the little lunches, wiping the little tears,  
 With firemen, battling, fires and dogs and falling timber,  
 With this young man, the street corner, a cigarette, the first  
     time, the fire he can feel,  
 And with that woman, walking, Main Street by the church, the  
     make-up and the man she wants, the dull heat,  
 On the bus, with the crowd going shopping, going for haircuts,  
     going to the hells and the heavens about the city, the  
     babies crying, young men eyeing, older women talking,  
 In the dime-store, with men smoking cigars, speaking about  
     insurance and their sons,  
 With the waitress in the little cafe, sandwiches, tea, a coffee  
     cup for tips, the laughter of businessmen eating lunch,  
 And with this pair speaking in French, broken and baring  
     the facts, waving a hand for emphasis, laying waste their  
     private worlds with a gesture,  
 The schoolbell rings, I am there, with the triumphant children,  
     pulling their book-bags, throwing their balls and running,  
 At the High School, loud cars, smoking, staying for soccer,  
     putting their arms around each other, putting my arms  
     around them all,  
 And I am with the baby in the carriage, crossing the street,  
     hearing the cars, hear the mother speak softly, feel the  
     breeze, smell the wind, the hot tar, the sun,  
 I see the river, see the cathedral, I am with the youth speeding  
     on Lisbon Street, with the man in the door of the bar, with  
     the officer knocking on the door, I am with the men sweating  
     on the bridge, see the taxi drop its passenger at the curb,  
 I am with them all, I am the young men, the old men, I am the  
     women in the parlor, the girls swapping dresses upstairs,  
     the ladies speaking in French, the man at the corner with  
     his hands in his pockets, the boy dropping pennies in  
     the grate, I am the telephone man and the nurse, the rich  
     and the poor, the healthy and sick, with them all, feeling  
     all things, seeing all there is to see, being in this city  
     this city.

## HOMEWORK

I am a child among these people, these streets  
places to grow on, faces about me, I  
am a child. I walk slowly and I soak it  
all in. So much to see; that woman, perched  
on her elbows, head out the window, a mother,  
old now, her children long gone; my mother.  
And this old man, the doorway of a club  
behind him, old plaid shirt and striped  
tie; one of my many fathers. He is there  
to teach me; my steps bring me near him  
and his face instructs; I see lessons  
for any child, and I am one of his.  
He does not know, the woman does not know,  
that I am related, does not know  
he teaches me standing there, his posture,  
his whiskers, the bar behind him all lessons  
worth the learning. A child such as I am  
must learn. Another block, more homework,  
work to bring home, home to the heart, thought  
about these faces and bodies and minds, the way  
someone softens against a doorway, how people  
cross the street and the speed  
with which they cross it. I take it all,  
take it home, feel it, find it somewhere  
in myself. I am a child who will grow  
and one day lean at a sill and see the world,  
the same world, a little older, a little  
more given to the young. Will someone see me,  
and wonder some day about children and women  
and men, all older, soon to be gone  
and replaced by us children, other children,  
wondering about women and men? I think  
this schooling, this street, this silence  
I find in my heart, my home, my homework,  
I think this schooling will keep me  
as a child. I think when I grow wiser,  
wizened, I will lean in a doorway  
and wonder about women and men, and learn  
from all the children.

WINTER: CHILD WALKING IN FRONT  
OF THE GREYHOUND TERMINAL

Child, young child, your hands are cold, you  
blow them with  
the fire of your breath, from your heart, the  
mittens no longer  
useful; what philosophy  
bade you walk today,  
in the snow and the coldness of  
this winter? I  
see you here, from the warmth of this  
bus window,  
and wonder what you are wondering;  
wonder how in  
your wanderings you came here,  
what brought you  
in such weather, in such wind,  
to the middle of the city  
and the chill. Are you the one  
who walks these streets  
singing, pausing to pet stray dogs,  
listening in on  
policemen giving tickets, ladies as they shop  
for lingerie? You  
are cold and still you are  
walking,  
I see the breath from your mouth  
as you sing, rubbing  
your hands on your jacket, the thumb  
of a mitten  
hanging from your pocket. Child,  
I am wondering  
as you sing, seeing in your song  
some truth  
to the coldness, to the frost  
that is building  
on this window; child, young child,  
your hands are cold,  
your lips are getting blue,  
must you sing?  
The bus is pulling away now, perhaps  
I will you hear you  
one day at my window, young child,  
perhaps  
you will come with  
a mitten and  
your song.

## SCHOOL'S OUT

walking in a world of their own  
indeed the world they share with us  
(and what is wrong with us?)  
they wind their ways home

some of them take busses  
who innocently stare from a window  
at the show  
making guesses

what do they guess?  
hard for us to say for sure  
who have grown demure;  
their/s is a world of no and yes

and they settle in front of the set  
with soda and chips  
with no one home just passively open their lips  
and pause to fondle the pet

we come home with our headaches  
and loosened ties  
confronted by a world of whys  
and unable to give what it takes

supper and it's a fight  
to make them eat  
as they fidget on the seat  
and tell us six tenths of their math quiz was right

morning comes and they go  
to little desks and blackboards  
thinking they confront the hoards  
of players in the show

do they know? will they know?  
when school is out and they have no home to walk to  
when what's asked of them is ten tenths due  
will they stop to wonder at the show?

## STREET HOCKEY

all that was necessary for them  
 were a pair of ragged gloves  
 and the hooked sticks they carried  
 proudly

the only world of aggression they knew  
 was centered on one plastic ball

behind them the stacks rose sharply  
 into the grey, monolithic structures  
 crouched around the skyline;  
     they took  
     no notice

but remained solely attentive  
 to the dance around them, the ritual  
 they performed in an innocence  
 they could not know

one small section of the street  
 became the stage, the arena  
 for the purity of the passion play

"No!" they would shout; "Hah!"  
 and "Good shot!" as they played  
 this deadly game, performed  
 this lively service

for them a goal was something simple, attainable;  
 to put one plastic ball between two old gloves

and they pressed on  
 they passed responsibility each to each  
 one left to crouch before the mouth  
     of success  
 movements, judgements, the still presence  
     of the pavement  
 they knew in the purity of their hearts  
 the problem and found in the innocence  
 an answer

so they played, unknowing of  
 the terror, unaware of sadnesses  
 (it began to rain),  
 never heeding for an instant  
 any higher call, any other activity  
 but the clack of the sticks and  
 the roll of the ball

## A RETIRED COMMANDER REMINISCES

In that house there were cobwebs  
swept slowly aside and replaced,  
large caverns under the tables,  
drapes that were the greatest of tents  
on dusty old deserts in the living room.  
There were a hundred friends and enemies  
among the knick-knacks, a thousand  
battered soldiers in the drawers,  
and one or two great kings by the hallway  
door.

Yet I remember uncertainly  
my tenure there as general, my life  
as the leader of the band. I see  
as I shut my eyes the battles  
and the long celebrations  
after victory, smell the must among chairs  
that was incense; yet who was I?  
And though I know who I led did I lead?

The waterfall staircase seems to have carried away  
the thoughts that I thought, leaving only floors  
strewn with invisible cat fur, the forest  
that was table legs since lumbered and used  
to build some other house. Yet I see.  
I see the mighty horse I rode,  
sturdy as a coffee-table, I see  
the armchair pushcarts, the letter-opener  
I brandished as my sword. Why nothing else?  
Why no great visions of myself?  
Why not the feeling I knew in the heat of battle  
I felt?

It is nothing.  
Years later, amid this expansive waste,  
my desk, I feel nothing more, remember  
only that I have something to remember.  
And the memories, like that last lonely bugle  
calling over carpets, fades, fizzles, fights  
before my eyes until at last, ending again  
an epoch, they focus all at once on the real work,  
the unimportant things to be done.

## HOUSES

Did you not know  
that I must be in my Father's house?  
He was there  
until he had his own house,  
somewhere down on Howe Street.  
Looked just like  
his father's.  
Same glasses and plastic plates,  
much of the same furniture,  
almost the same third-floor view.  
They even worked together  
for a shift or two.

His father finally died.  
Some respiratory disease.  
His son was growing up  
and wanted to leave.  
Got a job at the old Continental  
and a girl-friend twice his age.  
Lincoln Street isn't that bad;  
they gave them all the plastic-ware they had.

## MICHAEL GROWING UP

laughter in the fall.  
he rode his bike downtown through  
the leaves, falling.  
they fell.

afternoons at the hall;  
popsicles, braces.  
oh to have a beer, he thought;  
oh to not be here.

after the cars came the women.  
they came long after he.  
oh to be! to be!

spring and another six years;  
laughter now, and tears.  
a kid and another  
on the way.

wish I were at the old hall  
today;  
give me another beer  
give me one more beer...

## WALKING

is an answer.  
 Put the bottle on the shelf.  
 Put the keys in the top dresser drawer.  
 Put on your shoes  
 and take to the streets, opening  
 your eyes, opening  
 your ears to the humdrum becoming  
 music.  
 What can keep us from our earth?  
 Only our own insulation.  
 But walking in the fields  
                   in the streets  
                   into crowds  
 we feel beneath us solid ground,  
 we are grounded  
 as we look around,  
 grounded in the sounds  
 about us.  
 The earth, the city, abound  
 with wonders,  
 and under every streetlight,  
 behind every face,  
 in every place there are miracles  
 beheld only by the feet,  
 only with the rhythm beneath us  
                   within us  
                   around us  
 set free by the movement of the legs  
 and the motion of the heart.  
 You must move at all times to improve,  
 must walk to remove any block  
 from the soul, the whole pageant  
 of the city and the town around you,  
 the faces and the places put in place  
 by steadying your gait  
 and waiting for your feet and your eyes  
 to snatch your life from the skies  
 and put it on the ground once again.  
 Put away the thoughts of other men.  
 Put down your cigarette and turn off the news  
 and put on your walking shoes.

## THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

out there  
 in front of  
 Lewiston Supply Company  
 Incorporated,  
 incorporating all the elements  
 of high school students  
 and elderly ladies,  
 a crowd  
 ready  
 for the sale

ready  
 for Christmas  
 in early November,  
 the joy  
 of fifty percent  
 off on half  
 the stock

muffled  
 in mittens  
 held to the face,  
 mist  
 from the lips,  
 and conversation  
 with workers  
 and businessmen  
 out of the office  
 early

these shoppers  
 out there  
 on the sidewalk  
 and stepping  
 from the street  
 ready  
 for the advent  
 of receipts,

continued...

the ringing  
of registers  
and bells,  
the many little hells  
of gift-giving  
and living  
in a season  
of joy

bought precious  
with the waiting,  
cold toes,  
all the problems  
of parking,  
the personalities  
of people at the shelves,  
selves  
en masse  
for the miracle

## IN FRONT OF DEPOSITORS TRUST

something left there  
by another living creature  
dominated the sidewalk

people in denim jackets  
walked by  
holding cigarettes and babies

they circumvented what disaster  
they could  
lightly stepping round

one small taboo  
in a world of broken images

children squealed  
in innocence  
old men pretended not to notice

women in curlers  
looked down  
and then tried to look up

men with attaches and  
men with hammers  
made masculine detour

and it remained  
and waited for the next rain

presence of the aspects  
of life  
enervate the living

what terror  
of utter irreconciliation  
empty bottles  
less deter us from our destination

## THE ALLEY OUT OF KNOX STREET

winding his way through  
the alley,  
afternoon sun  
far away  
up the walls;  
four stories.  
here with the shards  
and the bottles,  
dried leaves,  
newspaper and  
other unmentionable artifacts  
of city life.  
forty feet of danger,  
narrow,  
dark with eyeless  
windows.  
he walked.  
he walked until walking  
was useless, feet  
following a flawless path,  
no turns,  
no choices,  
fear of cats and rats,  
other people  
where no other people  
should be.  
half way through  
he turned around  
and looked back.  
a prison  
of parallel clapboards,  
a faulty scope  
to think by.  
he thanked under his breath  
some god:  
no one had seen him,  
nobody knew,  
he remained alone  
with beer cans and rags.  
going forward  
was nothing very conscious;  
there was no other direction.  
behind him desolation  
ran with the wind  
through the alley,  
with a motion  
not unlike his own.  
ahead of him the sunlight  
spilt from the street

continued...

its greetings.  
his last few steps  
brought him to the sidewalk  
from such a hell;  
he stepped onto pavement  
and looked behind him  
once more:  
the alley ran back  
like a throat to some stomach  
of falling tiles  
and shattered glass.  
he took to the street and ran,  
not knowing now  
any destiny,  
no destination,  
having now  
no direction.

## CASHIER AT A LEWISTON PHARMACY

Working in a drug-store in Lewiston, Maine,  
Watching them come, and go again, the men  
With big cigars or boots, and women  
In perfume and boufs. The kids  
Buying cigarettes, and condoms, and pens,  
Watching them come, and go again.  
Seeing the farmers buy their shampoo, businessmen  
Newspapers, little girls glue; all Lewiston  
Comes from the mills and the streets, getting  
Their drugs and the salves for their feet,  
All Lewiston comes for a moment a day,  
Always they're going, never they stay,  
Come but for a moment to buy and to pay,  
And then off they go on their Lewiston way.

## WOMAN ON A SABATTUS STREET PORCH

Upon that stoop  
the roar  
of inner workings,  
dulled.

She took her tea of afternoons  
remembering the friends  
of her children.  
Irreducible. The courage  
of an evil innocence.

In the morning her garden  
and the clear memory  
of her first husband.  
The war and sugar rations,  
news of his death.  
She remarried and brought them up right  
she always said.

Age hones the passions  
to a dull flat slab.  
Her memoire is written  
in the way the steps  
are worn.  
The frailness of her tea-cup  
extends to her arms.

The flowerpot is nearly empty.  
Her lawn chair holds its offering  
at the rail of the porch, the stoop  
the little universe of this woman  
living the little universe  
of her heart.

## PREPARING THE FEAST

My mother is preparing  
a feast.  
Slowly she moves,  
deliberate,  
with the seed in her hand,  
dropping it  
in each tedious furrow.  
She is always so careful  
when starting the meal.  
Here she covers the trenches  
by hand,  
waters them peacefully  
and blesses them  
with a soft gaze and a quiet strain  
from some old song  
beneath her breath.  
Months from now  
we will sit at the table,  
anxiously awaiting the scents  
from her steaming dishes,  
but now we can only watch the beginning  
of the beauty,  
see her early preparation  
for the feast.

## ONE AND ONLY

live, from the heart  
of this city,  
the one and only  
walks her way  
to the offices of  
the clinic, seeing  
in each child  
a dream, how they follow  
their dreams  
to completion.  
the sweetness  
of seeing their breath  
in the chill  
morning air  
before them,  
and she wondering  
about husbands and doctors  
and the beauty she may carry  
within her, the dream  
she shared once  
and hopes to share  
once again.  
one and one only  
could have given this  
to her, and that  
once and once only.  
only once and that once  
was enough. and she feels  
without feeling  
what's within her,  
the beauty  
of a dream and that  
the dream of a beauty.  
what will he say,  
when her most glorious suspicion  
becomes true?  
and what will he feel  
when all her feeling  
is found  
to be full of  
the fact?  
will that one act  
when they became one  
become just one  
and one only,  
once and only once?

## TEA-TIME

She was as quiet as the cupboard  
as she opened the door, looking  
for a tea-cup and finding dust.  
She pulled once more her shawl around her,  
shoulders like breadloaves, wrinkled,  
hunched; her cat, at the screen,  
cocked its head at the kettle.  
Finding her cup she turned slowly,  
each breath a deliberation, every movement  
an ongoing process; she put it  
on the table by the doilies,  
a small jar of mints, old  
and drying, two placemats, immaculate,  
but one a bit more faded than the other.

Outside Sabattus Street spoke in old mufflers,  
distant sirens, children  
running to the dairy bar.  
She poured with a purpose  
unforeseen and unexpected. She sat,  
staring at the steam, watching  
the rusty carpet spread itself;  
already she felt warmer.  
It was a cold spring, the memory  
of a colder winter always close,  
little wood, painful trips  
to the market. Her niece from New Mexico  
couldn't make it for Christmas.

After the tea half gone  
mellowed in the bottom of the cup,  
no longer so warm, she rose to the sink,  
discarded with a long thought the old tea-bag,  
twice used already, and turned to let out  
the cat. She thought in its gratitude  
it would rub against her leg; rather  
it ran to the meager front yard.

She sat again; and again arose.  
She had noticed with a dull sort of anger  
she had left open  
the cupboard  
door.

MRS. PELLETIER

just to be able to breathe, to bear  
the children of her choice,  
to borrow the time and the money  
they need;  
she sends them off to school, sometimes hoping  
they never come back,  
watching the two wool caps  
falter off  
in the distance; cigarettes  
greet her return  
and the television's broken gaze

she is young yet, still alive enough  
to nurture her dreams  
with coffee and an occasional movie,  
one or two good nights  
with her husband; is that all? is  
there nothing more  
than the infrequent feeling of a pulse,  
the frequent occurrence  
of an empty purse? and she answers  
in the afternoon with  
milk and cookies for the kids, a brief respite.  
until supper, until  
the kettles are boiling again and the sun  
makes its way  
to a dull horizon, the door opens, he  
comes in with a six-pack  
and sits, settles like a fault  
under mountains  
in his chair; they eat, they speak three words  
through faces full of  
leftovers and fears, and they drink  
coffee and beer  
until the blessed bedtime brings them  
their separate breath.

## MISTER MARCOTTE

Mr Marcotte goes to lunch  
in polyester suits,  
takes his meals  
at the Deli.  
One beer and a club  
and sometimes mayo  
on his tie.

His cigars are big fat  
cheap ones,  
and he talks to the girl behind the counter  
like a niece. She smiles  
her usual smile;  
he does too.

He pays with a five-dollar bill.  
Sits at the table in the middle  
facing the door.  
St. Pierre comes in in a flurry;  
Mr Marcotte is there in a hurry.  
Shaken hands and a pat on the back,  
another order for table number two.

Mr Marcotte must keep an appointment.  
He crumples the napkin on his plate.  
St. Pierre is left to stare  
at what Marcotte never ate.

## THE WAITRESSES AT THE FRANCO-AMERICAN FESTIVAL

I was there and I knew  
they would come,  
red aprons before them but  
their knees still bared  
to the backs of our chairs.  
They were young but still skilled;  
they said their thank-yous  
with their hands in their pockets.  
All eyes unbeheld but beholding;  
the unalterable hello  
of that particular gait.  
The beer was the endless constant  
in the equation  
of this dance;  
even the old men on the stage  
held plastic cups  
the chalice of their songs;  
cigars  
would cense the halls  
of the tent.  
And they came through it all,  
to the women with large earrings,  
to the men with large women,  
to people pregnant and shirtless and full  
of some laughter from beyond the fair,  
beyond even  
the beer;  
came to people like me,  
sitting at a long folding table  
with my hand in the air,  
adoring the way they gave answer  
to the wishes beyond their control.

O, the waitress,  
and the soul!

## THE CARPENTER

the tools that are my trade  
 a hammer  
 these hands  
 and my heart

making new again these houses that are old  
 that were built when the fields  
 were first furrowed  
 when the stones were being hauled  
 by the horses  
 to the wall

I build  
 and in building  
 I am making a world

a world for a man of his own making  
 of giving and taking  
 in a place where the trees  
 are my rafters  
 where sun and snow and turning leaves  
 watch as I work  
 and bless my work as I watch

I am a man of spring in any season  
 renewing old works with my own  
 and knowing my own reasons

renewal with wood  
 and sweat  
 and smiles that will last  
 longer than nails and plasters  
 that will remain in these walls  
 through the winters and falls  
 that will follow

working with my own hands, my heart,  
 the tools of my trade  
 my craft  
 answering the questions of life  
 in the dirt on my knees  
 and a jovial laugh

making new and renewing  
 and knowing as I'm going  
 the reasons, seasons, laughter and tears,  
 the years, knowing as I go  
 the sun and the snow  
 shaped by my hands  
 and held in my heart

## THE FARMER AT THE EDGE OF TOWN

Sinking in a sorry art  
the bony-fingered little man  
does what he can,  
and knows it's enough in his heart.

Everyone else thinks it's not, of course;  
he shudders at the beauty of the leaf,  
while we say he's shuddering in grief,  
in grief at the loss of a horse.

His smile is only wrinkles;  
his smile is his life, his art;  
the sound of his heart  
to him abounds, to us it barely tinkles.

And sunk within that sorry day  
when with his smiling breath  
he breathes the breeze of death,  
who will feed the cattle,  
and who will reap the hay?

## A BUM

he came  
from Lower Lisbon,  
but I doubt very much  
he lives there

that old paper bag is the same paper bag  
he had last week

his face  
the same face,  
still faceless but for eyes  
and that nose, that nose  
that is cold, red, that red nose  
in the middle of an otherwise faceless  
face

red hands too,  
color  
of the bellows by the fire,  
but cold, having ripped  
too many pockets  
and held too many  
bags

where is he from? and  
we wondered:  
a face like that  
a bottle like that  
he is old and has lived in  
the cold

he came from Lower Lisbon but  
I doubt that's where he's from

## A WRETCH

one woman against  
one man, an idea.  
nothing but an overcoat  
and a head of disheveled  
hair. stockings.  
and very thin legs.  
walking without a limp,  
but a halt in each step,  
each yard a separate torture.  
she talked to herself  
in talking to the world.  
something about wearing high heels  
to church,  
and he can shove it  
up his ass.  
she revolved herself  
around her pain.  
the torment of a marriage  
made for the sake  
of a marriage.  
all she knew now was that her feet  
were wed to her shoes,  
on Park Street,  
in front of the Salvation  
Army building,  
by the court,  
walking.  
singing to herself  
her curses,  
her life the gutteral  
denial, insane  
becoming inane.  
one lonely woman  
against the world of one  
lonely woman, an idea  
about one lonely man,  
on Sunday afternoon  
in the city.

## THE JANITOR

one building, one man  
in the night,  
tattered jacket  
still bearing its patch,  
a name-tag,  
an identity,  
pushing a broom  
through the halls,  
stale donuts and black  
coffee; the janitor  
keeps it all clean,  
follows the halls with a mop,  
picking up footsteps  
from the floor;  
he sees in the dust  
the way people live,  
stains the mistakes  
of executives; money speaks  
in typewriter ribbons  
and manila folders;  
he empties the baskets  
of burdens of information,  
old signatures,  
crumbs from the desks,  
looks at each telephone  
with horror for fear  
it may ring; on break,  
sitting in the closet  
with the only dirty sink,  
he leans on the incinerator  
burning, burns  
his thoughts and his dreams  
with the papers,  
the staples, watches his life  
melt with scotch tape  
in the flames;  
he tosses his styrofoam cup  
into the furnace,  
takes hold of his only existence,  
the buffer,  
shines the floor for the people  
he never sees,

continued...

making for them  
possibilities, clean,  
for their lives and their dreams,  
polishes the switchboard,  
the doors and windows  
looking out into darkness,  
his daytime;  
nights here are lonely  
and he sleeps in the day,  
eats an occasional sandwich  
between the dustpan  
and the barrel;  
one man in one building  
six nights a week,  
one life among the rubbish  
of many.

## A BLIND OLD MAN

I cannot see;  
the world has too much bothered me.  
The changing leaves are banners of  
another victory.

Let me into  
this prison where the colors go  
that I might have to understand less  
and more just simply know.

## THREE MEN

I.

I'm me.  
I have two hands of five fingers each.  
I am tall enough to pick  
crab apples, low enough  
to eat them.  
Now I am here in my home,  
then I was in hers.  
I eat apples, I eat her  
in the apples.  
I will go to her and bring  
an apple pie.  
She will call me by my name,  
a simple name.  
I have a ring,  
an engagement ring,  
for one of her five fingers.  
I wear my humble sneakers.  
I live on Baxter Ave.  
And I'd rather not wait  
in her house.  
I hurt where all men hurt,  
that place where I would hunt,  
where I can climb most high,  
my heart.  
Hero of all Heroes I swim  
but the distance to her house.

continued...

## II

I am I.  
Two hands, each with five fingers;  
I am a man, tall enough  
to pick apples from her breast,  
low enough to eat them.  
Now I am here in my hell,  
then I was in heaven.  
I eat the apple of my eyes,  
I eat my eyes in grief; I eat  
her if she would.  
I would go to her  
and bring my fruit, myself.  
But she will call me names unfit  
for the ears of what she names.  
I will fall in my ring  
of tears, look  
at my sneakers in shame,  
walk to Baxter Avenue,  
never to wait on her again.  
I am hurt, hurt  
in the heat of my heart,  
unable to climb but the stair  
to her room.  
I will swim a million million miles  
in these tears.

continued...

## III

I am that I am.  
I have five fingers, five! on every hand,  
two hands, hands that are tall enough  
to pluck fruit for I am low enough  
to pluck what I may.  
I am scheming in my home to go back,  
back to her now as she was then;  
and I eating the apples of her eyes  
with mine, consuming in my eating  
even her. Where will I go? I go  
to her! bringing fruit and seed  
and a blackbird pie!  
She will call me things  
she never knew I was!  
And I shall make a ring of my two hands,  
a ring around her neck!  
Crush with my sneakers her lips!  
that trod on dirty Baxter Ave.  
where never again from my window  
will I wait.  
Where do I hurt? in my heart? I  
do not, you shall!  
I will hunt you down to the sofa,  
climb every wall that you climb,  
swim in the agony you made me create...

## BRIDGE PARTY

you knew among the tins of fish  
I would find you, worrying  
about table-cloths and ashtrays.  
you said before the night would come  
too soon. it is here.  
under the blue shadow of your apron  
you wring your hands and look  
to the mousehole with horror;  
there is nothing there.  
the shelves stand sentinel  
to the fear; you impose upon a bottle  
of Tobasco sauce your convoluted will.  
they cannot feel; you feel  
too much. dusk is slow tonight,  
bringing to the gardens and the walk  
small feet and to the table by the fire  
playing cards, eyeglasses with rhinestones  
and quilted cases; they await you.  
and here still in your robe!  
there your straight hair  
falls like cornsilk upon your face,  
your eyes almost shut; I can see you  
and you know it. the tea-pot whistles  
some unknown memory you try to ignore,  
but the force of it has caught you  
among the jellies and the cheesecloth.  
will you not join them? they sit  
in the drawing room with small hearts  
held delicately in small hands.  
their eyes are on laces draped over the arms  
of overstuffed chairs. they need you.  
there I can see you move, slowly, and reach  
for the biscuits, slowly, and the bird's leg  
of your left arm struggles with  
the knot at your back. you go,  
as you knew I would know,  
to join them, beneath the hem of the drape  
of the evening.

## MY MOTHER'S UNCLE

related and remembered as an uncle of airs  
he came to us and climbed the stairs  
to his room  
his only possession his dead wife's broom

he never slept  
but in sleep swept  
the demons from the adjoining room

the more the bristles touched the floor  
the angry dustballs began to pour  
from the cupboards and the undersides of tables

(he did all that he was able

but never is that nearly enough  
never did he win  
in dreams and life there's so much stuff  
to keep those demons in)

in the morning down he'd come  
in his oldest suit  
and sit there almost deaf (and dumb)  
from the night's pursuit

but one morning he actually left

no one touched his room for days  
but later while cleaning it  
and almost without meaning it  
mother found her dead aunt's broom  
broken in half in the private bath  
adjoining her uncle's private gloom

## COUPLE PLAYING CRIBBAGE IN WINTER

Outside the snow was falling with  
That white and hushed sensation;  
They had known it often before.  
A kettle whistled on the woodstove.

Six cards face-down effected  
A revolution each deal upon  
The table. Pegs ran around  
In circles. This is what it is

To be alive. He bent over his hand  
Like a shepherd. She returned  
With two cups of cocoa in hers.  
"Your crib?" "Yes, dear," she said,

And picked up her cards. "Cut  
The deck." "Oh, yes..." at his heels;  
"Two for me already." He put down  
A ten. He said, "Ten." She reciprocated

With a queen, and he a jack for three.  
(The snow was two inches deep.)  
"That's a go..." and red moved ahead  
One more. Cocoa at a time like this

Is the only suitable prescription.  
They drank and drank deeply, cup  
To lips, eyes shut. "Go, dear."  
"oh, yes..." At the end of one hand

He was ahead. "Shouldn't have played  
That queen." "Glad you did;" his  
Moustache, white and plain, quivered.  
"Do you remember the time little Jeffrey

Got twenty-nine? He was always so sharp."  
"Sharp nothing. He was lucky."  
And so it went until the snow began  
To stop. Five inches. The kettle

Had been dry for half-an-hour, the stove  
Full of simply ashes. This is what it is  
To be alive; this is what it is  
To bear the storm. "Just one more game..."

## EMBROIDERY

Hardwood rakes her back, the spindles  
Of the rocking chair, pillars  
Of her world. The creak of rails  
On the oakboard floor. Pale hands  
Braid the scenes of some reality,  
Stretched on the frame, needle and thread  
Creating. Mankind's hands have made  
A world as hers do now, stretching  
The cloth, piercing the mind  
With memories, stitching and plying  
And building, placing each color  
In its place. She leaves her work  
For tea, whistling in the pot,  
Leaves for a moment her porch, pausing  
To pet the cat. Does some cat,  
Like that of this old lady,  
Scratch its back at our doorway,  
Tentatively touch with its paw a ball  
Of purple thread, unravel the work  
Yet to be done? Is mankind doomed  
To scold such inhabitants of the house,  
To start again each world, ravel again  
Each ball of thread in our possession,  
Like the lady, sitting for hours  
In a single rocking chair, letting the tea  
Grow cold again? She returns and finds  
What the cat has done. She gently shoos him away  
With a nudge, picks up the little hoop  
Of her world, begins one more time  
The Creation.

## WORKERS ON THE L-A BRIDGE

sculpture, and flytying, and painstaking  
 calligraphy  
 sense in hands, sensitive  
 to the flight of such song, the bond  
 in a drop of blood, a small  
 droplet of sweat, the sea;

these craftsmen, building  
 this bridge, cities  
 dependent on them, their sweat  
 their blood, sensations  
 and song on the brow  
 under the sun; they tie,  
 sculpt, write in wrought-iron

their souls;  
 sing in cement the heart  
 of the sity, the heart  
 of their lives, the lively  
 exuberance in a long  
 day's work, the real work,  
 the art of what needs  
 to be done;

                  hands and legs  
 the fire, the thirst,  
 the commotion and communion  
 of the flight and might  
 of one small bridge  
 over one small river  
 of the sea.

## SUMMER MUSIC

He would pluck as if plucking were all  
 there was to the world--all there is  
 is music; he knew it.  
 He bent upon his guitar, plucking.  
 Everything was music; music to us  
 was everything. We listened and knew  
 of his world.

There on the porch,  
 we with our beers in our hands,  
 he played until playing was all.  
 Nothing left out of his song, no note  
 unknown, no one unknowing enough  
 to never know the message, the music;  
 he the minstrel of the twilight,  
 sun setting over the railroad tracks  
 behind us, four cold beers and a song.  
 He the mentor of our minds, our hearts  
 opening like flowers under fingers  
 plucking strings.

He played  
 until the song was undone, this song  
 never finished, the plucking never done  
 but left for other fingers, other songs,  
 other flowers to feel it. He rested, sipped,  
 looked to the sun and stretched his hand  
 in the shadow.

Everything  
 was there on that porch just then.  
 The air still hanging about the summer  
 evening, transfixed, transformed,  
 with his music. The world, his world,  
 our world was there in a splendor made delicate  
 by music, the dawn of his fingers in  
 the evening of the heat, the plucking  
 still with us in the strings, still taut,  
 of our souls. We will pluck  
 as if plucking were all that there was  
 to this music, this music  
 which is all that there is.

## ADVENT

Oak Street, middle of the night.  
 Sighs crackling from the clapboards,  
 freeing themselves and falling  
 into the night air with a flame,  
 a burst, a break into color and smoke.  
 Sidewalks fill with the secret delight  
 of people watching, in wonder,  
 wondering whose house this is, who  
 the ambulance is taking away.  
 In the chill December midnight  
 the trucks come wailing, washing  
 the snow in a miracle of light,  
 fathomless depths of tire-treads  
 and water and footsteps running,  
 reeling, hoses sent through snowbanks  
 to the hydrants squatting about  
 the street.

Black coats convene  
 around the doorway, drive with a torrent  
 through to the hall, washing  
 the woodwork of its flame, the fire  
 alive and struggling to free itself  
 into the night, sending its sentinel  
 of smoke and ash, flashing with a roar  
 its hunger and its strength.  
 Across the street the lights click on  
 in the flickering, faces appear  
 forsaking their sleep for a view  
 of the spectacle, the spectacular  
 space awash with the color of  
 a private holocaust.

Overcoats  
 under the shadows, people begin  
 to feel cold, rub their hands  
 in their pockets, yet feeling a strange heat  
 on their faces. In this hell  
 of plaster falling and paint melting  
 into puddles on the ice two people  
 are praying for a faltering flame,  
 a finish to the fire and a dawn  
 with a less fantastic blaze  
 for the horizon, the end of a night  
 of kneading the hands and kneeling  
 by a stretcher on the street.  
 The advent of the hissing and  
 a sputter to say it is all done,  
 the night again dark when the end  
 finally comes.

## BYZANTIUM ON FIRE

The City of the Saints, sentinel  
to eternal gold, glazed mosaics,  
was burning!

There the afterlife was churning,  
spiralling up  
in smoke;

the sages all having  
one last look.  
What Phoenix

but Art would there be?  
nothing hung  
upon a cross?

No, nothing; nothing but the text  
embossed in the arms  
of the scarecrow.

What does it know?  
and it without a country.  
Gold is the color

of the flames, the channel clogged  
with straw and fire;  
unholy desire

for something immortal  
without the mortal basis  
of the pyre.

Byzantium on fire:  
Not a gold urn  
but the burning of the lyre.

## GONE FISHING

Peace

is a funny word  
spoken so often it is seldom heard

we pull on the mainstays  
and dream of the fish  
    their wide eyes almost human  
    in their struggle to survive  
    themselves

they fail:  
and on the beach a boy with a pail  
    listens  
    and hears none of them  
    die

towards the end the blood  
surfaces in the foam and begins  
its dance around the stern  
    something we earn  
    for such observation  
    a little to spurn  
    our dead conversation

we remind ourselves of the fun we are having  
and yank the jib:  
    we're off!  
    we're on  
    the wrong path  
we must tack to attack  
what we feel  
the cornering wind  
and the scraping of the keel

we spoke  
in the lowest  
of tones  
    nothing  
    could do  
    what we've done

in ports all over the world there are men  
who are ready to do it again

## CROSSROADS DEMAND A DECISION:

this is wrong.  
Man will ever stand at the juncture;  
nature and spirit, beauty  
and beast; a decision.  
But no, no; a choice does not mean  
a decision must be made.

Freedom and necessity necessitate  
being somehow free  
from making it. Sin  
is the ignorance of ignorance.  
The anxiety is bound to destroy us,  
bound to make us create.  
We know only what we knew.  
Still at the crossroads,  
and nothing to do.

We can stay here,  
can we not?  
And rather than follow  
a particular path,  
give each path our thought.

## PHILOSOPHY

Arrival  
at the truth.  
And every one is the true one,  
everyone follows  
the truth of the heart  
in themselves.

They demand the exact nature of fact.  
And fact is what they say it is.  
Truth is their truth.

This is the nature of  
the beast that is no beast:  
To offer up a morsel  
and say it is the feast.

## THE SIN OF INTELLECTUAL PRIDE

"It pretends to be more true  
than it is..."

Reinhold Niebuhr

Dwarves on the shoulders of giants.  
Each generation climbs on the back  
of its ancestors, striving  
for a summit that is found  
every time. Limitations  
of grandfathers do not limit  
us. Our truth is the truth.  
Each perspective  
a cut above the rest. Each race  
the last race to be run.  
Each generation generates its truth  
and every truth is the true one.

Baring the facts we bear children.  
And there are unseen children  
on the shoulders of the dwarves.

## THE ROAD TO KNOWLEDGE

Alone, after long years of study,  
Elias S. Faust said, "I'm ready."  
He stood at the crossroads to truth  
That he'd searched for since earliest youth.  
"At last," he said, "wisdom is mine."  
As he stood underneath the street sign.  
But Elias looked up, alone and still lonely;  
The sign read: THE ROAD TO KNOWLEDGE:

EXIT ONLY.

## PINCHING ONESELF

the solipsistic tendency  
to awaken in certain worlds  
to dream  
to blossom in certain colors  
this is the edge  
of perception  
of perceiving the truth  
beyond the eyes

not only cats  
can be caged

wondering each world into awe  
into existence  
the awful arbiter of a particular  
reality a particular sense  
of sensation

what it is to live and breath is this:  
it is to see the world beyond the world  
and to intimate the one within  
the one without which we are lost  
but in which we lose ourselves too easily

to dream or to sleep or to wake  
to make  
very carefully  
the cage  
we must escape

## YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

You only live once  
in a while  
the deadly life  
creeps upon you in the stealth of the light  
and surrounds you in knowledge  
of your waking sleep  
quickly as a splash of cold water  
and a slap on the cheek

then  
in a fit of thrashing cryptic sheets  
you arise  
to utter complaints and wipe your eyes

life toys with you and laughs  
you smile and play  
noticing slowly it is day  
but the more awake you get it seems  
you'd rather sleep and live your dreams

## THE FURY

when you hear that heart beat  
against the walls in fury  
and cry out for well-earned attention  
do not turn your back  
and callously look at the floor

the puddle on the tiles  
may be your blood  
though the children walk through it  
and dirty the refrigerator  
with your deeds

when you see your breath before you  
struggling to enter your lips  
do not hold them shut  
and do not spit the awful taste of death  
and life in the sink  
when it's full of dirty dishes to be done

the children have no idea what they do  
and neither, it seems they scream,  
do you

## TWO CREATIONS MYTHS: STETSON AVENUE

made from the dust  
in the corner of the eye,  
not always dry, but oozing,  
the man in the strings begins  
to swallow the earth

he thinks he likes it  
but is wrong

he cannot separate  
the singer from the song

he falls over a stick in the orchard by the stream,  
picks himself up, and starts to scream,  
searches himself for pity  
in his orchard city

they say life started in the sea  
this he knew all along

still he cannot separate  
the singer from the song

in places like this  
with no ocean  
it wouldn't taste so good  
without the motion  
of people creating in each other  
new lives, new selves,  
from all the old trash and dust

without the morsel of love among the lust

the sand on Stetson Ave.  
is all that some can have  
but it wouldn't take so long  
if the singer were the song

SIR ISAAC NEWTON IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN:  
A DRYAD AND SOMETHING TO BE EATEN

still, another

and it comes to us from the trees  
there are avenues of daylight in those limbs  
there are haunted dryads  
dropping fruit

there are no things whatsoever  
untouched

and another comes down

we follow

the fruit of which  
we cannot swallow

under the tree there are those things  
unrooted and barely alive  
discovering theories in the hope to survive

again  
another one drops  
and the light is increased  
while it's fading

uneating man thinks there's something pervading

that's the heart of it but who sees the heart?  
the trees are still growing their bark  
and listening for moments to drop  
the fruit of the realm that is art

perhaps in the throwing the thrower will fall  
but wood nymphs are nimble and man too small  
it is  
another one  
dropping

under the tree  
a small breath stopping

## THE TREASURE

that can  
that alley  
that cat  
each themselves in the other  
each the treasure  
of this beam of light  
    the single lamp-post  
    daring enough to uncover  
    such a miracle  
a miracle  
unaccustomed to discovery  
    that few can discover  
and less accustomed to attention  
    beyond an unknown glance  
        a litter of bones  
        a curse

## THE MOUSE INSIDE MY HEAD

I could not understand that mouse,  
The way it followed its way through the rafters,  
Inside the walls, feeling its way  
To the side of my bed beneath the window.  
Hidden, but I knew it was there.  
This is not a tall building, and is old;  
This mouse (I assume it is a mouse)  
Scratches by my ear, plunders the sawdust  
And dirt next to me as I try to fall asleep.  
I think it must keep me up for a reason.  
And why do I think that? It is only a mouse  
Lost above the floorboards, finding a path  
To some end. It tells me with its feet  
That thought is a rehearsal of feeling,  
That feeling can be the failure of a life  
Of too much searching, a mission among numerous walls.  
I close my eyes, count the mice  
Jumping over two-by-fours, try all too hard  
To surrender; but thought and my thinking  
keep me up. And I understand no more  
About why in the middle of the night this mouse  
Feels its way through the wall at my head.

## THE HUMAN CONDITION

catching all hell, caught up  
in the process of youth,  
he was caught red-handed catching cats  
and tying to their tails tin cans.  
can't a guy have some fun, face  
the frantic illusion of life  
with a little fantasy, a craving  
for more than there is?  
there is a law against catching  
others' cats, ordinances  
about tying tin cans to cats' tails.  
there is no more; a law or two,  
listless alleys full of untouchable  
cats, and one small boy with a box  
of tin cans and some string.

## A HORROR

It wouldn't be that he left it there to die,  
But he did, and that's all there is to it.  
Young children are forced to ask why  
And their mothers to explain why he'd do it.  
Puppies are puppies and kittens are cats;  
And that's all there is to that.

THE WITNESS:  
BOYS THROWING BOTTLES IN THE DUMP,  
ONE LONE SQUIRREL

he was an unseen participant  
in this ritual of waste  
a flurry of ashes  
and a spent cigar  
two old wheels from a baby carriage  
and him

other things were there but they were seen  
he cowered beneath an old stove  
and tried periodically  
to escape  
they wouldn't let him do that  
though they never saw him  
never gave him a thought  
he did not run

he stayed there  
and died

and became  
with the pottery and the paintbrush  
a part of it all  
a piece of the rest of the pieces  
one more corpse in a cemetery of bottles and cans

they left with their boots  
having broken all the bottles they could find  
searching and then throwing at the trees  
the washer and the tub  
the sparkling stone  
the stove  
raining stained-glass sacraments of power and of praise  
destiny and death  
in the dump

continued...

they left  
and he stayed  
died for them and their prayers  
of shards and crashes and the hallelulahs of old spoons  
died  
of fright  
the figurative redemption  
of trash  
total diminution  
of despair

death  
in the dump

## THE RAINSTORM OF HUMAN DISCOVERY

it comes until it went  
and when it all is spent  
the puddles  
remain guardians  
of the past  
the last frontier  
frontiered to death;  
the flowers catch their breath

## A STONE IN THE POND

a power in concentric  
circles  
the focus  
of the lives  
participants  
in spheres and fates  
rays of the sun  
enclosures  
pyramids and symbols  
religion etched  
in sidewalks  
games played with marbles  
and with dice  
cosmic energy brought  
to sources  
cards and diagrams  
squares inside squares  
triangles  
a power in concentric  
circles  
places for thought  
to be found  
wine to be drunk  
circular chalice  
circular motion  
circles  
around one another  
inside  
one another  
centered on one center  
the center  
of a power  
a power in concentric  
circles

## THE STONES OF CHILDHOOD

built this church  
and ground themselves into  
this tar

I travel  
the street without carpet  
and touch  
the remembrance  
since sacrificed

a tree had fallen  
no people  
will know it a steeple

no stone  
left alone

no prayer  
not a hair  
not a bone

this altar  
will falter  
until it finds its true home

worn by a year each year this rock  
faces the sacrament of the clock  
and worn by the millions of uninteresting feet  
this street

no red carpet or pews  
this stonewall is for you to use

fencing in or fencing out  
it's alone

before it was put here each stone was thrown

PRAYER SPOKEN IN THE SUNSHINE  
IN FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL

Bring harvests to the fields of fall-  
torn men who sow with seeds too dry  
and old. Bring the sun to darkened daydreams  
but leave us our nights intact;  
show us the dawn we thought was sunset  
on the hills. Bring rain to the rivers  
that flow within us, flowing to the sea  
of your love, whose waves are large  
to tear our sandcastles down and small  
to lick them clean. Bring us ourselves  
and follow us as we come to you,  
bringing back the harvest, the sun and the rain,  
we thought was ours.

## THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

Inspiring! those aspiring spires!  
They reach for the sky, and they reach!  
It will never be just quite the same;  
The skyline will ever bear the name  
Of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.  
High! high above they point the direction  
To heaven and earthly correction,  
But that's not all!  
Stone! stone among the soot  
Placed firmly is its foot  
Among the streets of the city.  
Far more, far less than merely pretty  
It stands  
As it has stood  
Within the heart,  
And its heart is good.  
You see it, its tall pines,  
Before you see the dirty lines  
Of young mothers seeking welfare.  
And there, there  
You feel their work, their life,  
Among the children, with the wife,  
Far below the magnificent steeple  
Among the many people.  
The cathedral all you can see from the hills,  
Long before you see the mills,  
The ills of the folk who live under  
The greatest architectural wonder  
Of the town.  
You look up  
And they look down.  
It stands and they stand in it, the saints, the spires;  
Around them stand the small desires  
Of the flock  
That stand around the rock  
Of its foundation without a hint of concentration  
Not caring and not knowing of all that could be going  
On within those walls:  
The inspiration, and expirations,  
Of all those Peters and Pauls.

## WHEN COUGHING DROWNS THE PARSON'S SAW

It was Sunday, in the big  
 cathedral.  
 We usually didn't go there; it was  
 Lent, and we'd given up  
 our old church.  
 The ritual of progression.  
 Personally, I was sick anyway,  
 sick of the old shoes and the tie,  
 tired of playing in the nursery  
 with babies  
 in many-colored coats.  
 Pneumonia had gone around that winter  
 more than once or twice;  
 it was cold.  
 The priest came in with the wine  
 in his hand; altar-boys  
 rejoiced  
 when the choir took over.  
 (Someone told me they built it in the thirties  
 to attract the bishop from Boston.  
 He stayed, rather than come  
 to get sick and sit  
 in the middle of cold grey stone  
 and dull slate,  
 in the middle of a cold and dull state.)  
 The priest looked up and said, "Ahh..."  
 (I imagined a divine tongue depressor  
 sticking from his mouth) and went on.  
 Someone coughed  
 in the middle of the sermon.  
 Not just a cough, but a battery  
 of throat muscles in rebellion,  
 not so dainty,  
 but the ultimate exploration  
 of the bounds of expectoration.  
 The priest began  
 to pray.  
 The choir tried to follow  
 but lost the way.  
 One man gave up smoking on the spot.

continued...

Over coffee, when parishioners collect  
their children  
and eat brownies too early  
in the day,  
many discussed the disgusting occurrence.  
"A shame," said one (who sold insurance.)  
Personally I thought it not a distraction but  
the main attraction  
of the service:  
when the chalice came round  
we were all much more nervous.

## SUNDAY MORNING

Complacencies disregarded, now it is time  
 for the city to sleep a little later  
 and rouse in time for church. Church here  
 usually means Mass, a mass of people  
 heading for a mass of Masses.  
 Humming a few bars of soap in the shower,  
 polishing brown shoes with black polish,  
 they run for their cars.  
 Litany rehearsed in the mind.  
 Stopping on the way for Lifesavers for the kids,  
 and the big Sunday Globe for Daddy.  
 (Give me the comics!)  
 After church everyone's lazy and Mom has to cook.  
 Getting out the big glasses  
 and the nice silverware and Sunday dishes,  
 Dad listening to soft music in his chair.  
 He reads the paper wisely, he a sacred  
 idol in the early afternoon, sitting there  
 unmoving, unmoved by the terrors  
 of the world, his legs in such a way  
 that the children are tempted to stick their heads  
 through his lap in surprise: "Hi, Daddy!"  
 and he feels his stomach clench and sweat begins to form  
 on his forehead. Those little sisters will never know.  
 Dinner is a formal affair, growing casual  
 with age; the dishes are always the same  
 and so it seems is the food. All that inspiration  
 does little for the pot roast.  
 Later a game of ball for the kids, or  
 sledding, or dolls, on rare occasions even cards  
 when Mom and Dad join in and let  
 the kids win. You can still smell the wine  
 on their breath. The morning ends around three  
 in the afternoon on Sundays. Carwashes  
 grow dim around five, six o'clock already late,  
 and seven on the seventh day means Walt Disney.  
 Finally the kids are in bed, and  
 Sunday morning ends for good around nine, when nothing  
 is left to be done though there's too much to do.  
 Next week slowly begins and you try to go to sleep,  
 purged of your sins and your worries, ready to face  
 tomorrow with a clean conscience so you try to face it  
 today, and you blow it, just as your lids  
 shut for the very last time. Monday morning.

## THE RIGHT OF THE EVERYDAY MAN

The right of the everyday man is to be an everyday man.  
To drive your car and enjoy it;  
To work, and work hard, and get paid;  
To pay; to drink the beer of your choice.  
It is the right to sleep on Sundays,  
To go to church only if you go to church;  
Or to build your daughter that dollhouse.  
The right of the everyday man is to be a man every day.  
To say the things you want to say,  
Or the things you'd rather hear.  
To call this or that day the best of the year,  
To wake the next claiming it the worst.  
To be the last, or to be the first; to hunger, to thirst.  
It is the right to run from the stoplight early, or late;  
To be patient for hours and then refuse to wait.  
The right of the everyday man is to hate  
The life you love with all your fate.

## MORNING BREAK ON A BREEZY DAY

This sweat,  
this simple cigarette,  
smoke trailing off  
in the wind.

Resigned, we are resigned  
to a waste of breezes  
blown to some end.  
Single and alone the world  
follows the urge of the wind,  
voices its empty despair  
(the machines will never care).

And trying as hard as we can to live,  
these people, this world, myself, give  
all we can to become woman and man.

The whispering wind blows strong,  
steals the smoke from my cigarette  
held in my fingers too long.

This world, these people, still long  
for all they hold;  
this old wind is all there is,  
and this old wind is old.

## PAYDAY

never met the man  
                  whose name is on the label  
never  
                  knew his daughter  
                  or his wife

but I know  
          better than most  
the machines  
the heat  
the insidious growls  
                  of foremen  
the sweat  
                  always falling  
the noise  
                  and the routine confusion

I know the joy  
                  of Friday afternoons  
the slow and subtle wealth  
                  of every other Thursday

I know  
                  the dull roar  
                  the looms and the drills  
the awakening pain  
                  kept asleep by dreams  
                  and endless routine

never knew the man  
                  who signs these checks  
but know his name  
                  all too well  
haven't shared his heaven  
                  but am living in  
his hell

## THE RITZ

was dark inside, and the lady  
at the counter  
didn't card him. He walked  
to the curtain, legs  
shaking, for fear or anticipation  
he could not know.  
Funny, he thought, her age:  
she's old and dressed like a Broadway-lady,  
at some other theatre, a program  
instead of money in her hand.

Dark. Inside it was dark and he felt  
his way to a seat, afraid  
he might touch someone.  
He didn't, he couldn't even see  
if anyone else was there.  
And then  
the flood of the screen, the splash  
of light, the sigh  
of the curtain being drawn...

It was boring.  
He stayed but he knew  
there were only so many permutations,  
a degree of permeation  
long ago passed.  
The lights came on at last.

And caught him, with the rest,  
among the unblessed,  
men with no teeth, boys  
laughing too loudly, and he  
walking much too fast.  
Outside it was still light and he headed downtown,  
thinking of the next time with his head pointing down.

## HAPPY HOUR

cheese

and crackers

and wine in the evening after work

there were clocks that told us  
exactly when to go home

and wives and husbands  
there  
waiting to serve  
the ultimate hors d'oeuvre

and we take  
we eat  
and in eating we  
consume

soon little left  
but a larger room

and a taxi ride to a place  
made of clocks

## DEATH

The Greeks said grandly in their tragic phrase, "Let no one be called happy till his death"; to which I would add, "Let no one, till his death, be called unhappy."

Elizabeth Barret Browning

so they whisked her away  
on a stretcher,  
small hand clutching a daisy,  
wide eyes still wanting  
a large last look

"you mustn't remember  
this," she said to me,  
"but for the flower--  
the flower is everything  
I have..."

for she gave everything else,  
and like a daisy  
blossomed every day,  
opening in the sun  
and giving sunshine

"it's been a happy life,  
it's been a happy day--  
tell your mother  
the cookies are for your sisters  
and you to share..."

I wasn't hungry, but  
I ate, tasting the sweetness  
of her smile, the last smile  
behind a hundred doctors  
trying to steal from her

her final happiness,  
the last withering blossom  
of her death

THE OCCURENCE:  
A DINER AFTER WORK

this is how  
it happens,

Formica under elbows in the artificial dusk  
of candles smothering by the shakers,  
the waitress  
can-I-helping me until the tip's been paid;

(I'd rather get laid)

he said,  
and it was done.

walked out to the din of the streetlamps,  
smelling oil.  
he felt in his pocket for a feel and his keys  
(oh yes, please)  
and shrugged at the Christmas decorations.  
nothing but the freezing rain and three cigarettes,  
seven dollars,  
a ticket stub to some old movie.  
Lisbon Street at half-past-eight  
is a wonder;  
he wondered  
what it was  
he was up to.  
gas stations are all there are that is left,  
and thoughts of God and all that stuff;  
one week-old paper wrapped around a pole.

kitchen lights are the ugliest and nearly as bad  
as candles,  
whiter, bluer,  
than the rest of the world, and shining  
onto placemats and unwashed bowls.  
his apartment was an ashtray.  
he turned  
every faucet handle  
he could think of,  
flushed just once and was done;  
after looking in the fridge it was time  
for a beer.

continued...

dark again.  
 lights behind pictures  
 and clocks.  
 no one would know  
 it was him,  
 one vast fart,  
 and more slow.

he ordered his pitcher and took up  
 a glass

(a toast to the world from my ass)

and he poured  
 it was pouring  
     outside.  
 the Bartender looked like Jesus.  
 born in a mangy tenement off Blake St.,  
     St. Blake!  
 the bartender must've been Saint Blake  
 and all he could think of  
 was waitresses.  
 seven bucks goes fast.

time again.  
 this is how  
     it happens,  
 the blinds are drawn to the drizzle,  
 alarm by the ashtray shut off,  
 cereal.  
 the serious drive  
 to the mill,  
 the hill looking like a mountain  
 of blood,  
 sheets and socks  
 the sole greeting,  
 grubby men with their bags,  
 children throwing early stones,

this is me,  
 he said,  
 this is a dream for Formica and tiles,  
 this is a man with a bag and a boy with a stone,  
 my life is one long cigarette,  
 one last beer,  
 this  
     is how  
         it happens...

A DRINKING SONG:  
WALKING HOME AFTER A NIGHT AT  
THE L-A WORKINGMAN'S CLUB

such profusion  
couldn't last  
something cut it  
at the pass

we drank until drinking was useless

walking home realizations took my arms  
and made me hug a tree  
(a tree I was in love with  
secretly to me)

I felt bitter at the newfound thought  
that what I was I was not

still the rain will fall  
not upon some but on all

bending trees and bushes  
to the ground  
(all you got to do is look around)

I made it home.

And now I'm all alone.

I know too well cheap whiskey  
and the faded coat of the street;  
my legs are mere extensions  
of my feet.

Mellow into that moment  
wherein the elbows bend  
at the bar, and you sit around drunk  
discussing who you are.

Life is all a sacrifice;  
Add another cube of ice.  
The only way to keep the score  
is to count the libations you pour.

## THE HAPPINESS

was not found there,  
in the bars, under tables,  
by bedsides in dank rooms.  
They would look, peering  
into glasses.  
They asked themselves  
and answered with a shrug,  
pulling themselves deeper  
into the hell of paychecks,  
fast cars, waterbeds and beer.

(On the bandstand in Kennedy Park  
two children danced  
to the music of the trees.)

Where is it?  
They searched too hard  
for fear they'd miss it.)

(Confetti fell around them  
as they kissed.)

They said,  
happiness runs in a circular motion,  
and then it runs away.

(She was old  
but had her garden.  
New life in every petal.  
Picked two tulips  
for the dining room table.)

They asked again,  
looked one more time,  
and left. Bells  
began to ring in the Episcopal church.

(Everyone looked,  
and some of them smiled.)

continued...

They pulled on their coats  
with a frown,  
drained their glasses  
and paid the tab.  
Bells again;  
what's all the ruckus?  
They looked and saw nothing:

Just an old lady giving flowers  
to two children, only two kids  
giving flowers to a bride...

## ONE EYE

seeing through one eye  
 the buildings  
 change

into other buildings,  
 break  
 into monuments of one desire  
 or another,  
 unfreeze into statues  
 to other gods,  
 other nations,  
 other lives;

they bend.

what is this menace?  
 this indulgence?  
 this temptation?  
 to shut one eye  
 and by opening the other  
 shut out half  
 the world?

other buildings  
 in other eyes  
 change again,  
 into mountains,  
 moments of hideous monsters  
 under beds:  
 that same old fear

holding our hands to our ears  
 we hide our eyes under this or that lid,  
 children playing games  
 with the reality  
 before us

caught  
 in the gaze  
 beneath one eye

## A CIGARETTE

though it is not windy this rhapsody  
tonight  
follows phone-poles  
down Main Street  
and doorways remain  
much the same

midnight  
and the cats scurry across the road  
unknowing  
unaware of the smoke  
beneath the streetlamp

in the quiet light the puddles  
huddle about the hydrant  
a watery congregation  
that like the moon reflects some distant sun

he looks  
and holds in his world  
those thoughts beyond  
the river  
down from the graveyard  
to the mills  
speaking through blank windows  
in the brick

a taxi-cab passes through his attention

tomorrow will bring bosses  
and the comfortable tumult  
of the looms  
three beers and four children  
and a pick-up truck  
in the driveway

tonight the light burns a dull hole  
in the night of unfound treasure  
the hidden and subtle pleasures  
of the club and its coterie  
of sins

continued...

beneath it  
within it  
he stands sentinel to his own fears  
and the culmination of wasted years  
wasted in the search

the search for what?  
in answer a newspaper flutters  
by the man-hole and stops to rest

is this the quest? is this  
all that there is?  
a still midnight after an early whore?  
is there more? is there more?

walking home demands concentration  
and a fight to relax

the cats  
are arching their backs

leaving the universe  
of the circle of light  
leaving ripples around a butt-end  
in the night  
he glanced back to what now was a memory  
to one small world in a world of rooms  
and buttoned his coat  
and walked home

## WHO YOU MAY BECOME

morning,  
    fortified cereal  
    and eggs,  
coffee.

belief in a self  
    whom you don't even know;  
why not  
    introduce yourself  
    to your self?  
why not  
    see the man who you are,  
    who you may become?

large pieces  
    of your life  
    flake off  
and dissolve  
    in the rain  
    on your way  
    to work

you see yourself  
    in the puddles  
and step  
    in your own  
    shallow face  
dirtying  
    your socks and shoes

your coffee mug holds  
    all your dreams  
the world  
    of the morning paper  
encroaches  
    upon your important desk

if the coffee were to spill  
    the paper  
    would soak it  
    all up

who you are  
    prisoner of coffee breaks  
    and cereal bowls  
and who you may become  
    the distant ache  
    of a soul

## L'AIR EPAIS

PROLOGUE

Sixteen years ago  
 thirteen beers  
 led to an arrest.

(In need of reconstruction.)

Four years later he was married,  
 and marriage proved to be fruitful.

A year after that brought him his job,  
 which a series of self-denials  
 let him keep...

(And he even began to like it.)

I.

1981

autumn

all he heard was the crash  
 all he saw was the fire  
 all he could do was to run  
     against the frightened crowd  
     to the wreck and rescue them

he saved them!  
 the city came alive with commendations

he became Mister Do-good  
 and he did very well

Mister All-America  
 three kids and a dog  
     a loving wife  
     and still a good job

(he was even invited  
     to join the Masonic Lodge)

continued...

1982

MLAM Man-of-the-Year  
parked his chevrolet  
and walked into his office

life was good  
and his was better than most

II.

Christmas

gave all the kids what they wanted  
but his wife wanted more

"you're not the same;  
you're different than you were..."

New Year's Day

he awoke with a thunder  
and began to wonder what he'd done  
too many martinis  
and a few too many beers

he made his resolution  
and resolved to stop the tears

III.

walked downtown and stopped at a bar  
"it's ten o'clock; do you  
    know where your children are?"  
do I really care?  
went home at midnight  
and the dog was the only one there

(can Mister All-America be divorced?  
in his role as Mister Do-good  
he forgot to fear the worst)

continued...

thirteen beers led to a rest  
 from which he'd rather not awake

his secretary didn't smile any more  
 and work was about all he could take

IV.

eleven o'clock on Lisbon Street:  
 "where are my feet, my feet?"

(it was February 23rd, and there she was)

the air in here is stale  
 and the stains on the seat are pale

what am I doing? why am I here?  
 is there anyone to rescue?  
 will no one rescue me?

the man behind the counter  
 poured another beer

V.

Two hours.  
 The soul the food  
 which virtue devours.

(He had seen her again,  
 and promised he'd come.  
 Two more hours would bring him there.  
 Do I dare, and do I dare?)

Drunk now. His  
     wife again.  
 Staring  
     into the glass.  
 What did she do  
     for me?

continued...

what did she do for me? (looking around)  
 who are they, what are they to me?  
 and what did it all lead to?

he looked down  
 he looked up  
 he looked around in the din  
     of clattering glasses  
     and people making asses  
 of themselves

who are they? and what to me?  
 and who am I to they?

the Man-of-the-Year  
 was no longer the man of the day

## VI.

i am drunk i am scared  
 left the room  
     the stale tobacco air

i am drunk  
 will i make it there

in the goriest glory  
 in its midst  
 came an awful denunciation  
 (is it love or hate i feel?)  
 and now i renounce  
 that former renunciation  
 deny  
 the self-denial  
 and stand ready to stand the trial  
 in a coffin of a room

(he dragged his feet in the gathering gloom)

continued...

VII.

there it is  
 (he rushed into the alley  
   and took a piss)  
 there it is  
 and here I am  
 no longer of-the-year  
   but just a man

midnight

across the abyss of the river and the canal  
 across the streets  
 across the hollow life of the city  
   he heard it

a bell began to ring  
   on some old church  
 (haven't been to church  
   since Christmas Eve...)  
 and counted out heavily  
   twelve hollow beats  
 (the rhythm of his heart,  
   the rhythm of his feet)

the air became clear--he could suddenly hear  
   the river  
   and the taxis stopping at the corners  
 he could see the lights like fire  
   burning themselves  
   into his eyes

  Open wide the gates of Hell...

he stepped forward  
 to the rickety stair

  and come forth from the abyss  
   to greet me as your brother and friend!

continued...

one flight  
 (is this flight? or simply a man  
   in the middle of the night?)  
 one simple desire  
 behind the eyes and beneath the fire

Grant me the indulgences of which I speak!

(and who will rescue me?)

he knocked

he knocked three times  
 on the hollow wooden door

Come forth and answer to your names  
 by manifesting my desires!

#### VIII.

she screamed and opened  
 the door  
 (was there more? is there more?)  
 and there she was

he wanted to say  
 HERE I AM!  
 I AM HERE!

Je ne puis comprendre ce mystere.  
 Un malediction d'une enorme puissance  
 est attachee a ma persone et a mas actes...

the room was black  
 and had too many corners  
 a mirror  
   on every  
   wall

continued...

she offered him a drink--  
 wine in a silvery goblet  
 (he drank)  
 but why am I here?

La question est vieille et oubliee.

but he knew

No secret can be told  
 To any who divined it not before.

(he drank again,  
 and moved into the room)

### IX.

bed on the western  
 wall  
 candles  
 stifled the air  
 and it was dark

in the mirrors he saw himself  
 some radio station's drunk of the year

And yet a man who raves, however mad,  
 Who bares his heart and tells of his own fall,  
 Reserves some inmost secret good or bad.

she lay down  
 as he undressed  
 (head to the south)  
 conjuring lust

May my secret thoughts be marshalled  
 into the movements of the flesh...

he approached the bed  
 still drunk and scared  
 and by this time even madder  
 at the world

The world rolls around forever like a mill;  
 It grinds out death and life and good and ill;  
 It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.

continued...

he stood naked in the room  
 offering as he turned  
 the profile of benediction

Nonuci dasonuf Babaje od cahisa ob hubaio tibibipe:  
 alalare ataraahe od ef! Darix fafenu mianu ar  
 Enayo ovof! Soba dooainu aai i VONUPEHE.

he faced the bed  
 "Move therefore, and appear!"  
 and bent to her  
 "Open the mysteries of your creation!  
 Be friendly unto me,  
 for I am the same!"  
 and the window fell to the sill  
 as he lowered himself into Hell

X.

in a trance on the western wall  
 Christmas returned with the scent of new toys  
 and the Friday night Mass at the cathedral:

And again, when he bringeth in the first  
 begotten into the world, he saith,  
 And let all the angels of God worship Him....  
 Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity;  
 therefore God, even they God, hath annointed thee  
 with the oil of gladness above they fellows....  
 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up,  
 and they will be changed, but thou art the same.

XI.

and though he was drunk  
 ability was as capable  
 as desire

Napeai Babajehe das berinu vax ooaona larinuji  
 vonupehe dealime: conisa olalogi oresaha das cahisa  
 afefa. Micama isaro Mada od Lonu-sahi-toxa,  
 das ivaumeda aai Jirosabe. Zodacare od Zodameranu.  
 Odo cicale Qaa! Zodoreje, lape zodiredo Noco Mada,  
 hoathahe Saitan!

continued...

XII.

Assez! Assez!  
and she opened the window

a new man blew out the candles  
life awaited him

the bell across the river  
rang once

Shemhamforash!

and he left it on the pillow  
and stepped out on the street

I am alive!

and will not care  
whether or not I am man-of-the-year  
abstinence is something to abstain:  
I'll turn no cheek  
but my back to them

EPILOGUE

living on Lincoln Street  
and still alive  
instead of fifty  
it's seventy-five

## THIS UNION

the blood  
    of this union,  
the sting  
    of the flesh:  
salt, tears, ocean;  
    blood the best

a hunger, a feeling,  
    forgotten  
in the passion  
    of the peace

the blood  
    in the beauty  
    makes the beast

## A HISTORY LESSON

we are no one  
without blood

my great great uncle fell in the mud  
at Lexington  
(his name was simply Harrington)

no matter what the pride or cost  
Lexington Green was just a big cross

(any name or place sufficed  
even those of Jesus Christ)

the only way to conquer need is to breed  
and then to die  
and let the younger men ask why

## THE SUICIDE'S AFFAIR

"It is a beautiful evening," he said,  
And lifted with an effort his head  
From my quivering knee. The sun was low.  
And he said once again, "I must go."

After the shadow was utterly gone  
I stayed in the room and I waited for dawn;  
The usual things reappeared  
In exactly the fashion I feared.

Another meeting like that and I'll die,  
And he will be left to ask why.  
He'll know after all has been spent  
That I'd much rather come, so I went.

It was a beautiful evening, but then  
Every night is beautiful to men  
(As long as they're able to treat us like so;  
They would rather come and then go).



## THE ANDROSCOGGIN

carrying with it  
     the city  
 the river flowing  
     over rock  
 foam and the product  
     of mills  
 line the banks  
     (and banks are lined  
 with money and with lives)  
     this river  
 following this river's  
     course  
 choiceless destined  
     to one certain destiny  
 each age remembers  
     its own sort  
 of pollution its own  
     kind of product  
 here at the falls I am climbing  
     the hill to  
 the rocks looking at the city  
     from the top  
 gulls wallowing  
     in the pools of slime  
 stacks on the horizon  
     stand sentinel  
 I keep my vigil  
     in silence  
 noticing that time  
     is a stream  
 is a vehicle of  
     our pollution  
 the falls are roaring  
     and I am keeping  
 my silence who am I  
     to judge this sound?  
 who am I to stand here  
     quiet seeing  
 the songs drowning in the stream  
     beneath me

continued...

the larger stream  
around me?  
the gulls are flocking  
to a spot beneath  
the bridge garbage collecting  
at a pillar  
the skyline is lost  
behind buildings  
it is a horizon  
of dogs  
a river full  
of dogshit  
carrying with it  
the city

## SISTER CITIES

sharing  
     a boundary  
 one side  
     of the self.

water, water is the medium,  
     the median,  
 something to keep them together  
     in keeping them  
 apart.

from one side one can see  
     the other one,  
 spires and steeples,  
     stacks,  
 houses huddled on the hill,  
 and the mills,  
     a congregation,  
 gregarious in a way,  
     constitution  
     of a way of life,  
 concentration of lives  
     in one spot made  
     of two.

two.  
 two cities  
     being one place  
     for the thousands,  
 hundreds of communions  
     from the chalice  
     of this one communion,  
 one community  
     halved  
 by the things they both  
     have.

having one place  
 with two names,  
     one face  
 made of thousands  
     of faces,  
 one soul given solely  
     to them.

continued...

water and bread,  
 bread and water,  
 living the lives  
 with a river,  
 the giver of sense  
 of place,  
 sensation of space,  
 shared by a bond  
 of common time,  
 common substance.

substantial, solid,  
 the flowing together  
 of two lives.  
 by earning identity  
 they mold their names,  
 face each other  
 unbounded but  
 by each other,  
 each an other  
 to each,  
 a sister,  
 a friend,  
 a lover,  
 above all blame,  
 below all praise  
 but the praises they share.

the air,  
 the air and water.  
 given, taken,  
 each to each,  
 passed silently by bridges and bonds,  
 boundaries,  
 bellfries,  
 people.  
 people the common commotion,  
 denominator  
 in the equation they share,  
 participants in the celebrations  
 of air  
 and water,  
 pavement under feet,  
 people keeping the beat,  
 the tempo  
 of the times,  
 giving the place  
 its common face.

continued...

collaboration  
     of the fact,  
 the concert  
     between two people,  
 two cities,  
 the fact a fact  
     of fellowship,  
 affiliation with  
     a cause,  
 a cause for wonder,  
     for awe,  
 a cause for the people one saw  
     from this side  
     or that,  
 for motion of the monument,  
     magnificat.

and sided by each other  
     in that way,  
 in wonder,  
 in fun,  
     at play,  
 conspiring with those spires  
     to inspire,  
 to intrigue,  
     to infect with their union  
 our desire,  
     to perfect their federation  
     with a friendship even higher,  
 they expect,  
 expect us to see  
     in their freedom  
 something more  
     than merely a tie,  
 more than the same piece of sky;  
     they expect

continued...

a confrontation  
    in their expectation,  
a facing of facts  
    with the fact  
of the friendship they feel  
    in the way they lie  
    on the land,  
and in the mind.

they feel in their feeling  
    we should see  
    in ourselves  
more than a you,  
    more than a me;  
these cities can see  
    there is something  
in being free

together.

## TAYLOR POND ON THE WAY TO THE JUNK-YARD

The swift feeling of the final swing  
around the bend and your stomach all one  
thing somewhere in your gut a tire or two  
might squeal you're on your way to  
M & P to get new sidepipes and boom! there  
it is: Taylor Pond. A slow and swimming  
sort of pond, a few houses scattered by its side,  
the blue and the sunshine all right there  
where you need them. You feel your foot  
ease up and see a boy fishing, a barn  
at the top of the hill looking down,  
leaves just starting to turn. You turn  
the curve, the car getting drunk with the view,  
getting slower, the junk-yard a lightyear  
ahead. Fields full of flowers,  
leaves rippling with the waves, a farmer  
haying with his eyes to the water, water there  
for the taking. You take, blue upon blue  
around you, the roaring of the car now subsided  
to allow you the pleasure you never sought,  
but now know you'd always wished to find.  
Another turn, up a hill, the pond beginning to fade  
in the mirror; two barns, a tractor, trees  
still blowing in the very same breeze that was touching  
the waves, but that breeze is dying as you step  
on the gas. The roar reawakens and you are off  
making a wind far faster over another hillock  
around another curve the pond now just a memory  
in the back of your mind it is time it is time  
to buy those sidepipes time for M & P time  
to see the junk-yard in all its glory.

## MISTER JOURNALIST, COME TO GREENE

had to see  
                   for himself  
 nothing to lose  
                   but time  
 and he took his pictures  
                                   wrote  
 a story and  
                   confessed:  
 there isn't much  
                   to this town  
 a fire  
           one murder every  
 ten or twelve  
           years  
 an occasional scandal  
                   involving  
 the principal's  
           wife  
 only a church  
           to stand bastion  
 over the boredom  
           of Main Street  
 two shots left  
           the whir of  
 the winder  
           dull scratch  
 of the pencil  
           and back  
 in the car  
           to go home  
 had to see  
           he saw  
 nothing to see  
           but the raw lives  
 of people with nothing  
                   to see.

## BUCKFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I assume you may know of it at least.  
 In the hills, trees aflame with October,  
 A green building, built in '28,  
 Above it a black sign with gold letters:  
 "BUCKFIELD ELEM. SCHOOL." Right next door  
 a church with the prettiest steeple;  
 the other side a garage used for  
 Industrial Arts.

A school only possible  
 out here. Small, oblique, boxy:  
 classrooms little boxes with only a blackboard  
 and little desks to tell it apart from  
 the Grange Hall down the street.  
 A place for learning, and a place  
 to learn. It is necessary to see  
 such places--towns like this one,  
 these houses and farms, those magnificent  
 hills. It is necessary to see them  
 and make them a part of your life.

Other people make their lives  
 in those rooms. Children open  
 little books and ladies write  
 on the chalkboards; soon they will work  
 in the city, or stay to cut wood  
 for the winters. The cars outside belong  
 to former students, old pick-ups  
 and beat-up camaros and jeeps.  
 The man who drives the only firetruck  
 went there thirty years ago.  
 He knows the village, the rooms  
 in the houses that have burned, how the ash  
 from the fire fell on the rugs, and mantles  
 had to be rebuilt, homes  
 for the pictures of the parents,  
 frames carrying children  
 to their graves, the graveyard  
 on the side of the church  
 right next door.

continued...

It is something  
one must do, get accustomed to a building  
like this one, see the tattered American flag  
fly its course above the stones that make  
a ring around the pole. Stones and bushes  
hold patriotism true, in front of schools  
like this one, where children pledge allegiance  
to a little flag in the corner.  
It is necessary to see this: October  
in Buckfield Maine, the flag outside,  
the building building the lives  
of those people--people at their little desks,  
mothers and fathers in basements  
of townhalls, in the fields, working  
in the one-room Post Office up the single  
street. To see this is to see a world  
that is one of our worlds, is to see ourselves  
as we once must have been, pumpkins  
on the doorstep, falling leaves kicked  
in the yard, old flags flapping  
in the cool October breeze above the building.

## STEEPLES IN SUMNER

not much else, besides a field or two  
 of old hay left 'til late, occasional  
 pick-ups on their way  
 to town.  
 seems everything here  
 is free,  
 answers to no one but  
 the air of this October day.  
 trees let go their clothing,  
 unbundling up  
 for winter soon to come.  
 driving through one sees nothing  
 until the brook, around  
 the rocks coming to its splendor  
 by the bridge.  
 then you are caught, you  
 look around  
 in wonder, wondering where  
 you are.  
 Sumner.  
 a town unknown twenty miles away.  
 you feel in your veins  
 the crisp autumnal air,  
 fresh thoughts  
 following the stream;  
 you follow the road  
 and come to a church,  
 house of God  
 in the wilderness  
 in the middle of the hell  
 of hills and the poverty  
 of their people.  
 no hell, you feel,  
 but heaven:  
 you are right.  
 paradise in the form of pumpkins,  
 leaves by the side of the road,

continued..-

children in plaid jackets  
playing jumprope  
by the schoolhouse.  
and this church, long tall windows  
looking up, white in the color  
of the maples, grass still green  
for the eye.  
and that steeple! that steeple  
with the shadows of the iron of  
the bell, gables in all its slenderness,  
weathervane to top  
all vanes; no vanity  
in this small church,  
flashing of the leaves a symphony  
of color, and the steeple  
straight in its humility,  
sentinel of the townsmen  
and the fields.

## RANGELEY

High above the lonely lake  
a car of ugly people  
admired the beauty of God.

## THE OUTCROPPING

take it and touch the edges of the stone  
about the beach and feel  
the sand and taste  
the salt

the winds  
grow larger with each gust  
and grey beyond the waves

but feel  
the silence of such strength  
crashing against  
the rock

take up this shell and reach  
for such a recess and respite  
and know  
in the heart of your heart the science  
of the sea  
the long joy and agony of rest and restlessness  
and motion

touch the stone  
of this ocean

## THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

rock, juniper, and wind,  
and a seagull sitting still -  
all these of one mind.  
he who finds will  
to come home  
will surely find old faith  
made new again,  
and lavish welcome.

old things breaketh  
new, when heart and soul  
lose no whit of old refrain;  
it is a smiling festival  
when rock, juniper, and wind  
are of one mind;  
a seagull signs the bond -  
makes what was broken, whole.

Marsden Hartley

FOR MARSDEN HARTLEY:  
THE NATIVE RETURNING AGAIN

each of one mind,  
and all one mind,  
they surface, and turn, and find  
by the rocks the salt of the sea  
and glory

a gull remembers  
the signing of the bond,  
the singing, the song

each of a mind of its own  
and whole,  
and the way many minds make up  
one soul

## AS MANY LIVES

"...the artist may have as many lives  
as he can conceive for himself."

Marsden Hartley

the painting, the taking to give,  
of the woods; Sprinchorn knew  
what to give him.  
each man and each woman is free  
but the artist is freer  
than most; he lives  
any of a number  
of lives

painting this sea, that mountain, taking  
each breath with a purpose, each purpose  
the inspiration for the expiration;  
to make a world one must take the world  
as it is, add to it  
one's self in the clothing of  
the self: there are many worlds,  
many lives, in the space of a lifetime,  
the space of the earth and its beauties.

dance of the dizzying mind. nothing can deny  
the conception of a life, nothing  
can stop it. the artist in his paint,  
in his words, in his faces, in his eyes,  
conceives for himself as many lives  
as the world will allow and the world will allow  
quite a few. this life, in these woods,  
was given to us in the way it was given  
to canvas; taken from the trees, Ktaadn,  
Pemaquid, hunters and their spoils,  
taken and given new life, life conceived,  
life created anew, a new creation,  
a new conception of the world and the world's  
new world in itself.

the artist  
and the painting, the world that is  
painted, the paint itself: new lives,  
new fortunes, something taken from the world  
and given to the world again.  
as many lives as there are are taken  
to give life.

"COMING UP INTO THE PICTURE WORLD"

He travelled to come home, making pictures.  
Why he came back doesn't matter;  
It is the point all those pictures  
Can make should occupy our minds.  
Messages often need no reason.

The man is entitled to his life.  
He has given freely the images he saw;  
He came up into the picture world  
For us, picturing his truth  
In his poems and his paint.

Was he broke? Did he need  
Recognition? Was he born here  
Just for the sake of a place of birth?  
These cannot matter for us now;  
He came into our world

Bringing pictures, being  
One man among many, but one with  
A meaning for much of what most of us  
Merely try to see. Coming up  
To come home to the picture.

## THE GALAXY IN MY BACK YARD

"The fireflies / with countless lamps of night..."

Marsden Hartley

I looked! I saw!  
A galaxy of living stars  
over my back lawn!  
Heavenly bodies float,  
and fly! fly! fly  
about the night  
with an all-inspiring light;  
and I sigh.  
A galaxy alive  
with wings under moon,  
slow summer eve  
gone too soon,  
but my own private night  
of clear bodies, clear  
stars, lamps of night under  
trees! what a wonder!  
what a show! and I the only seer!  
I sigh, and follow how they fly,  
and feel in the following  
the beauty of the starlit sky  
in my back lawn.  
I sigh as they fly  
for they fly into dawn...

## HANDSOME DRINKS

standing  
 in glass and ceramic,  
 tall, short, stubby in a cup,  
 hot with the steam and cold  
 with the ice,  
 they are there  
     on the table

fruit, colors of fruit, shape  
 of the ice-cubes in the cool round  
 glass,  
 wholesome, dangerous, upright  
 above all the black

LUS

LOGH

one glimmer of metal  
 against the world

and one of them a chalice,  
 each one of them  
     a choice

they form themselves  
 in sitting still, in  
 staying there  
 until the will is broken  
 and the world destroyed

their being there their only voice

## SUMMER CLOUDS AND FLOWERS

share their shape.  
colors deliver us daily  
from the storm,  
one lone ship  
left to glide.  
what storm remains possible  
in such a peace?  
the petals are full  
and the blossoming clouds  
are unfolding.  
the bow cuts the water  
and the stern sees it return  
to its place beyond the vase.  
blue, green, red, white,  
orange and pink and blue,  
the color of one lone ship  
to dazzle the horizon  
with the motion  
of form  
among color.

## EIGHT BELLS' FOLLY, MEMORIAL FOR HART CRANE

After a painting by Marsden Hartley, 1933

"Above the fresh ruffles of the surf..."  
 one phantom ship  
 among the many elements  
 of blue.

There tolls in the midst the bell,  
 one figure eight  
 on its side,  
 eternity in the midst  
 of infinite eyes

from the underside,  
 peering at the hull, and he  
 staring down at the deck.  
 Clouds  
 ruffle in the sky, the surf

beginning to churn  
 its message.  
 "And yet this great wink of eternity"  
 flaps in the foresails,  
 follows the one yellow

moon.  
 The last crescent  
 of the sun.  
 Sirens are calling to whales' teeth,  
 the month grows young

and the body grows older  
 with the sand.  
 Blue stars are tangled  
 in the mast, the master  
 "admitted through black swollen gates..."

One yearning governs  
 so many hearts, one art  
 will sing them all  
 to the sea.

The final toll,  
 and one private ship  
 starts to roll...

ON DONALD LENT'S EXHIBIT  
THE SECOND TIME AROUND

Ascending the stairs  
with frogs. Animals  
are lines, are holy shapes,  
interiors, trees,  
houses of form.  
Etchings, existences  
brought out in shadowy  
tones, woodcuts bold  
with the praise  
of bodies, solids.  
At the zoo one can see  
in the lions the love,  
son and antelope,  
stronger, more sure  
in the shape.  
Dying birds  
and lines wild  
with the freedom,  
a necessary addition  
to the joy, making  
complete, making whole  
the whole exhibit.  
Ascending in tones  
the body  
of a knowledge, the form  
of afternoon, of  
animals and sandals  
aside from anything else  
but the senses.

THE UNITED NATIONS OF POETRY AND  
THE CLOUDY NIGHT GETTING COLDER

The fervor  
of accumulation, Orientals  
graced the floor and cookies  
in handwrought crockpots  
from the shelves; we

read  
and read well  
and Hopkins echoed  
a great many au revoirs

Yevtushenko, Rilke, Flaubert, Mr Lowell himself  
and cider  
zucchini cupcakes  
and very large flowers  
rabbits and sparrows escaping  
their holes

Jersey  
from across a river  
cities  
sharing a smell  
and people  
many people  
many voices  
real voices  
the voices  
gathered under lights  
folded onto the open page  
given a life

a new life  
a song, new  
fervor  
the accumulated masses  
of spirit, the clouds  
above below us now

the warmth between us  
the heat of that warmth  
to clean us  
and outside later  
walking home  
it getting colder  
clouds getting thicker  
the song still sung  
the poem yet unfolding  
the languages, the  
voices still speaking, that warmth  
making the cold  
more beautiful.

## A LOVE POEM

clear  
and over there  
a rainbow  
one end  
to the ground  
the other  
past the trees  
in the distance

fields  
in mist  
and sunshine  
mixed  
with the clouds

this is us  
a mixture  
the calm  
before and after  
all storms

this bow  
the bridge  
between us

## ANOTHER CELEBRATION

they walked down the street arm in arm  
 two dungaree jackets, exploring  
 the meaning of the touch, the feeling  
 upholding the claim  
 of their hearts

love in the middle of this street  
 still wins  
 tenements looking down cannot crush  
 the life  
 out of this embrace  
 two sunny young people  
 in love despite the clouds

they turn down Birch Street still clinging  
 to the clinging  
 of another  
 police cars and newsboys float past  
 they notice nothing but the sweetness  
 the cool refreshing warmth  
 of someone's arm around them  
 their arm around someone else  
 beautiful embrace  
 in the midst of dumptrucks  
 peeling paint  
 pain in the gait  
 of old men and haggard dogs

they were walking  
 and walking  
 in themselves; discovery  
 the beauty in the hand  
 touching the sweater  
 in the hand touching hair  
 hands  
 touching each other

a victory  
 another celebration:  
 love in the middle of such waste  
 wastes away the sham:  
 nothing left but love and beauty:  
 nothing but woman and man

## WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY, AND HE IS US

what homage  
to the collage  
of this city?  
the patterns  
of its streets and brickyards,  
lumber stores and feet on each sidewalk  
walking to each feat  
of hollow passion, hollow lives  
and large bellies, pizza crumbs  
and tired daisies in the window-box

the corner  
and a paper under the arm  
of a banker, the suit  
of every insurance-man immaculate  
but for the single stain on each tie

who are we? here at this time  
we are angels sent by heavens  
of tiled floors and counters  
in the back of old stores,  
every turn and alley a revelation,  
each young girl a separate confession,  
and offices, unholy, in buildings  
topped off by apartments, where children  
are conceived and candles burn lower  
until envelopes collect on the table  
and a knock appears at the door

we remain unseated at times like these  
still shuffling on each plate our allotment of peas  
settling into an easy despair and remorse  
which sooner left alone will run its course;  
we sit only to count our curses  
never quite knowing who it is we are versus

## CONSTRUCTION ON COLLEGE STREET

who knows?  
how the end will happen, how  
it will begin  
to end, how it  
will die? it is  
a certainty of which  
we are not sure.  
the tractors come  
and the trucks, the ruckus  
they make making sidewalks,  
jackhammers hammering until the murmuring  
in the ears cannot stop,  
the sheer steam-roller  
rolling out the tar, shovels  
scraping, rocks thrown in pick-ups,  
noise, smell, sticky pavement  
sticking to the feet, when  
will it end?  
they are here  
they have been here so long  
will they leave?  
who can say?  
but to say it is to wish  
too hard, is to  
wish away the gods and the demons,  
cement and pipe and wires  
run too well  
this world, how  
will it happen, we know  
all too well  
it will happen  
like this

## THE SOURCE

sifting through the rubble of Knox Street  
 I smelled the river and thought  
 why? why such a place as this?  
 and I knew:

                  beauty disguises itself  
 in sources; the source of peace  
 of love  
 of trees and the way busses roll through the streets  
 all beginnings and all the mire and ooze of humanity  
 and nature  
 and me,  
 the work, the sweat and blood and sperm  
 of the source, this city  
 beautiful too at its source, where the work to be done  
 can be found, where sweat in the mills and the bars  
 can be smelled, like the river, the beginning  
 of this ugliness, beauty disguised, at times  
 disfigured, but there! Beauty! in the streets,  
 under feet, in the fire, the dirt, the kiln  
 of the pottery of the soul, the oil  
 in the paint of Michelangelo, I knew:

sifting through the rubble of Knox Street  
 the place this place must have  
 the reason the river must run

## LEWISTON TWILIGHT

held by its thread  
     the dawning of the evening  
     slowly revolves on the axis of the river  
     and settles

with a yawn  
 at the end of the street

children  
     abandon bicycles and dogs  
     and remove from their pockets  
 small stones

the old man rises from the lawn chair  
     stretches  
     with the precise crook of an arm  
 and the cane  
     precedes him into the sallow kitchen

a lonesome auto  
     haphazardly drives past  
 and blows with a whisper  
     an old sports section against  
 a hydrant

this is the time  
 when mouths are round  
     and pies are cooled  
 when the city  
     beneath its skin  
     ripples once twice  
 relaxes  
 and is done

a headlight  
     flicks on  
 the policemen  
     slow on their beats

continued...

shops  
draw shades like eyelids  
the glistening jewels  
recline  
trees rustle  
like pillows being shaped  
by heads clouds  
in caravans  
saunter  
shopping carts speak to themselves  
in the wasteland of parking lots  
share only the solace  
of a beer-can left in the park  
catching in amber  
the buzz  
of fresh neon  
and the squeak  
of overdue noonday drying.

## MIRACLES

For in every day and in each slanting of the sun  
     come a myriad miracles  
     allowing our memory  
     to set the day in ink. The rain  
 Continues in its falling, feels itself  
     winding its way  
     through the air; the descent  
     a separate season and sense.  
 The sunlight dying slowly slowly does its dying  
     in lines between the clouds  
     and under chairs.  
     The miracle is remembering.  
 Each awakening, every drop of the rain,  
     is like the one before it  
     and like the one behind.  
     But every drop  
 Is an ocean, every ocean a life.  
     We awake and we wander  
     through the weeks, watching  
     the raindrops fall, the sunlight  
 Slant on the sill and die, decree  
     in its death another day  
     is done. And in each day,  
     each ocean we make for ourselves,  
 Each life, miracles remind us  
     of what we would remember:  
     sunlight and rainfall...  
     the miracles in all.

## TO THE CALLING OF YOUR HEART

Listen  
to the calling of  
your heart.

You feel in the strangeness of the day  
the moment. A series  
of such moments

makes it strange. You feel each moment  
your heart make its lump  
in your chest.

Listen to the vision each breath must pass,  
feel the edge of your pulse  
in your eyes, the

sensation of the senses  
coming alive after such a long  
life. Take into yourself

the reason for such a beautiful  
day. It  
is enough to be awake

and to listen.

## PIECING IT TOGETHER

walking, that's it;  
walking is the action of the heart,  
the journey so much more  
than arrival, the step  
is the step to the fulfillment  
of the foot

the foot is the heart  
of the journey, the journey  
is the heart of  
the heart

piecing it all together  
takes time, the time  
kept by footsteps on the street,  
up the stairs,  
on the beaches of sand and water and pavement  
the action, the act  
of walking  
and knowing how  
one walks

a path is the way you point your feet  
a goal is the way you walk it:  
follow your heart from the start;  
don't talk it

peace is the feet  
piecing it together

## YOU CANNOT SHINE

without the stinging cleanliness  
of speech, a song  
in your heart. Repeat them,  
those words,  
that tune on the tip  
of your tongue.  
Nothing means much when it's danceless.  
To shine you must breathe,  
be involved in the act  
of saying.  
Say it. Motion  
makes it happen, movement  
of the arms, the legs, the voice--  
repeat them only with your voice;  
merely talking  
does not work.  
Give it voice!  
Make it dance!  
Make it shine!

## A SONG AND WALKING TO THE BEAT

breaking  
    into song,  
the long meandering of man,  
    the maze,  
the amazing journey  
    come to completion

but what measure will measure  
    the end?  
our footsteps keep time  
    with the cosmos,  
all journey is return  
    and each ending is a song  
in itself

we sing  
    and our song  
is the singing

## NOTES ON SOME OF THE POEMS

JOHN 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (King James Version)

GIVING IT ALL A VOICE: "Giving it all a voice" is, of course, the aim of the collection. Sableman Plastic Heel Company is representative of the typical Lewiston manufacturing plant, situated in one of the old textile mills. Only the Bates Mill still produces its original product; the others were gradually sold and converted to house other sorts of factories and businesses. The building Sableman Plastic Heel occupies is special in that it is situated right at the falls of the Androscoggin River between Lewiston and Auburn, whereas others reside on the canal or below the falls, less exotic and romantic sites. The ominous presence of these old mill buildings demand attention, and their very silence is a speaking one. I have endeavored to listen and thereby give it voice.

ALREADY: This early poem re-introduces a recurring theme continued from the last one, the element of song. One of our greatest endeavors, I think, is to strive to translate observation into music. Once done, once the inherent music is recognized, we are free to think and interpret.

THIS CITY IT SINGS: Kennedy Park is the rather paltry city park downtown, bordered by city buildings, churches, tenements, and small businesses. It is the site of the Franco-American Festival two weeks each summer, when it comes alive in celebration. Aside from that season, it appears to be perpetually barren excepting the sauntering of old men and the frisbees of the young. One does see people swimming in the city pool, sweaty basketball players, and an occasional drug deal.

LINCOLN STREET: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE: Lincoln Street is in the heart of the mill section, between the canal and the river. Consisting mainly of mill housing, private clubs, and businesses, it is a distilled version of Lewiston in general, or at least that facet of the city that is perhaps most apparent to one who knows her superficially. Despite the hollow and grimy despair that seems prevalent in such neighborhoods, it has an inner life of its own that lends it some kind of charm.

MAIN STREET: Lewiston is one of those cities where Main Street is not the main street; Lisbon Street is. Nevertheless the poem holds true, for either of them.

WALT WHITMAN VISITS LEWISTON, MAINE: The obvious debt to, or imitation of, Whitman is acknowledged in the title. Whitman's all-encompassing openness is an inspiration to me, and I have tried to keep my mind and heart open to Lewiston as he did to America. He was vastly more successful. But I harbor the hope that I was and am not altogether unsuccessful either.

HOMEWORK: It is my strongest belief that everything offers a lesson if we look deeply enough into the eyes of the teacher. Also, this poem expresses to some degree the affinity I think all human beings share with one another. The man in the doorway of the bar could be Adam, the woman in the window Eve.

WINTER: CHILD WALKING IN FRONT OF THE GREYHOUND TERMINAL: I share much with the Romantics, including a certain reverence for children and childhood. But this particular child is not as innocent as the cult would have it; indeed, this child is one that could find a home in either camp of Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience.

STREET HOCKEY: Gloves here being the "goalposts."

HOUSES: See Luke 2:49, Revised Standard Version. Howe Street is near downtown, dominated by multi-family dwellings; Lincoln Street is on the other side of the canal and Lisbon Street.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON: I personally dislike this season immensely because of the meaninglessness and commercialism that has become associated with one of mankind's most miraculous occasions for festivity. But it's good for shopkeepers, many of whom in Lewiston need help to stay in business. With the demise of Peck's, the local century-old department store, a wave of going-out-of-business sales swept the city, including the once huge hardware store, Lewiston Supply Company, another bastion of the old and prosperous Lewiston. Just before Christmas in 1982 it announced it would be no more and opened its doors to the mob in question. Now it stands like a missing tooth on Lisbon Street, the once thriving commercial district that is beginning to resemble a ghost-town or a movie set for a Depression documentary.

IN FRONT OF DEPOSITORS TRUST: Depositors Trust is a large Maine bank with a very nice pillared building on upper Lisbon Street. The sidewalk in front of it is one of the most travelled, and therefore provides the scene for this poem.

THE ALLEY OUT OF KNOX STREET: Mentioned a number of times in the collection, Knox Street is a downtown street lined with large tenement buildings. It was evacuated gradually (I remember seeing an elderly lady standing in the screen door of the last occupied house in June or July, watching the construction crews tear down her neighborhood) and more or less razed, excepting a few buildings that are still standing awaiting renovation. The alley of the poem is real, but I do forget where it leads to.

CASHIER AT A LEWISTON PHARMACY: Purely autobiographical.

WOMAN ON A SABATTUS STREET PORCH: I seem to enjoy old women on porches. I think they say a lot in the way they rock or knit or lean on the railing. Sabattus Street is a fairly busy street with a lot of traffic and noise.

MRS. PELLETIER: Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is coincidental...

MISTER MARCOTTE: The Deli is another hole in Lisbon Street now, but before it went out of business (it lasted less than a year) it was the only place I knew of in L-A where you could get a real bagel with cream-cheese and lox. A real deli sort of deli, it was one of the few places with any sort of cosmopolitan character, and had the most wonderful pictures of turn-of-the-century Lewiston all over its walls. It was "tacky," but sincere. Unfortunately no one with more class than Mr. Marcotte frequented the place regularly.

THE WAITRESSES AT THE FRANCO-AMERICAN FESTIVAL: This was the two-week celebration that turned Kennedy Park into a Dionysian delight. Thousands of people were there all day and all night, eating ethnic food, singing, listening to performers of all ages and styles under the massive tent, going on rides, and drinking lots of beer and wine. Lewiston really comes alive once a year. All the folk come from Quebec and everywhere else to carouse and celebrate the greatest miracle--being French, being themselves. One's innermost thoughts become bilingual just walking around watching armless old men, dirty-faced children, unwed mothers, insurance salesmen, policemen, rock bands, and dogs have a good time. The waitresses the poem mentions worked under the tent bringing beer and wine to hundreds of people hugging each other and flicking cigars, clad in halter tops and three-piece suits and dungarees listening to French music and selling French balloons.

THE CARPENTER: Rather than a builder of new houses, this man is a self-employed craftsman whose greatest love and skill is to restore old ones.

A BUM: "Lower Lisbon" is the section of Lisbon Street dominated by all things of ill repute. Most people would venture not to go to the bars there, and many of them are private clubs. The section starts where the pawn shops begin to get heavy and progresses to pornography shops and, alledgedly, brothels. It ends at the Registry of Motor Vehicles, where gas stations and shopping malls start to appear after a healthy distance.

A WRETCH: This character is not fictional in the least. I met her on November 7, 1983, in exactly the state the poem relates. She was typical of many of Lewiston's lonely and desolated inhabitants, but her loud outspokenness and graphic swearing, as well as her plight (her husband (?) either forbade or demanded her wearing high heels to church), were unique. Lewiston, like any city, frequently sports people who evoke sympathy and pity, who at the same time it is difficult not to laugh. The pathos of this woman's situation was, through her ludicrous cussing and incessant desire to let the world know of her problem, transmuted to a sort of bathos.

THREE MEN: Behind the structure of this poem lies a questionnaire format. The questionnaire was answered three times, moving "from factual truth to wishful lies to the wildest impossibilities." This poem is a variation of that sort of movement, for all three men are entirely real and possible, and indeed could even be considered as one man. These are the questions this poem was written in response to:

Who are you?  
 How many fingers, how many hands?  
 Are you tall enough to \_\_\_\_, low enough to \_\_\_\_?  
 Where are you now? Where were you then?  
 What have you said that you'd rather not say?  
     That you'd say again?  
 What do you eat? Whom do you eat?  
 Where will you go? What will you bring?  
 Have you other names?  
 Have you a ring? What kind of ring?  
 What's on your feet?  
 The name of your street?  
 Anywhere special you'd rather not wait?  
 Where do you hurt?  
 Where do you hunt?  
 How high can you climb?  
 How far could you swim, in the night, in the rain?

WORKERS ON THE L-A BRIDGE: The bridge is the one connecting Main Street in Lewiston with Auburn's Court Street. It was under re-construction for over a year.

SUMMER MUSIC: On re-reading Wallace Stevens' "The Man With the Blue Guitar" I think this poem may have been somewhat inspired by his.

ADVENT: The religious elements of "Advent" are probably transparent. It is of course about nativity and apocalypse at once. The well-known element of delight in another's misfortunes is likewise apparent, but subsidiary.

BYZANTIUM ON FIRE: The obvious connection and influence is Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium." I wouldn't call it a refutation, but an admonition. Art really is only so immortal as man; as well as vice versa. When Byzantium burns, only the skeletons will remain in the ashes, clutching blackened and illegible urns. "The artifice of eternity" is the way a dying animal finally dies.

CROSSROADS DEMAND A DECISION: I hate people who think in black and white. Even if they are incapable of discerning beautiful colors, why is no one content to live in the realm of gray and look both ways? Bifurcation is our most serious offense, especially in matters of body and spirit.

THE ROAD TO KNOWLEDGE: For this I am indebted to a cartoonist who goes by the name of Revilo.

PINCHING ONESELF: Solipsism becomes heinous only when the balance between subjectivity and objectivity is upset. That balance is a fluid one with a lot of leeway, but still it is necessary to pinch oneself to make sure the pendulum stays in its bounds. Solipsism is, I think, an act of creation, but one that must keep natural laws in mind. The deepest sea to be lost in is the ocean of the self; to keep afloat, to remain thoroughly conscious, we must peer beyond the eyes, beyond the bars. Rilke's "The Panther" is an obvious source of this poem.

THE FURY: Imagine any kitchen in Lewiston, or any other town. This is a poem about awareness and communication, which are inextricable and possibly identical.

TWO CREATION MYTHS: STETSON AVENUE: This is really what the title suggests, a synthesis of two creation myths, the Christian and the Buddhist, related to a modern setting, Stetson Avenue, a road on the outskirts of Lewiston that borders on farm land. The orchard is fictional; there are no orchards on Stetson Avenue, but there could be. It is bordered on one end by fields. The Christian genesis myth posits creatio ex nihilo, man subsequently being formed from dust. Buddhism sees it differently; creatures of pure spirituality dip their fingers into primordial matter as a child would steal a cookie. The consequence is an addiction to matter, and the demise of former spirituality. The line about life starting in the sea is the scientific view. There is no answer, naturally. Nor should there be. In the end, the puppet, mankind, has only himself to blame and praise for existence, and has the power to create and destroy. What he does with this power is his own business in the end; the new selves responsible for themselves must deal with what they have and are, however they came into being. If we realized that, the song would be a happy one.

SIR ISSAC NEWTON IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN: A DRYAD AND SOMETHING TO BE EATEN: Was it the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge that dropped on Newton's head? Theories must remain theories. Unfortunately, science and art remain at odds.

THE MOUSE INSIDE MY HEAD: When very young I prided myself in not being of the sort of temperament that was easily scared. One night I left a drawer open in my built-in dresser. The family cat crawled in and found his way through the walls to the side of my bed. I ran to my parents' bedroom in tears. Hoping that mice are more prominent and industrious in Lewiston than are cats, I offer this reinterpretation of a long past event.

THE STONES OF CHILDHOOD: Even after a series of revisions I still remain unsure what exactly this poem is about. Sometimes the poem runs away with the writer, and in this instance I am left wondering about the life of my own creation. Frost's "Mending Wall" may be buried here somewhere, and the religious imagery is unmistakable, but just what I am saying eludes me. Nevertheless, I like it, and am sure it has a message however esoteric.

PRAYER SPOKEN IN THE SUNSHINE IN FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL:  
 The cathedral is the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, a huge Catholic edifice that dominates the city. It is the single most noticeable and impressive building in the area, a true gothic cathedral complete with rose window (though it doesn't look very rosy up close). Mentioned in a number of the following poems, it is an object of wonder for many people, who do not understand how such a structure of magnificence came to be built in a city of few magnificent things. I have heard a story that I credit only because I want to, and have heard no others, namely, that the cathedral was built to attract the bishop or cardinal of the northeast out of Boston to Lewiston, where the heavy concentration of Catholics would ensure him an eager flock. Well, he didn't come. But the cathedral remains, huge, the one good thumb among a myriad broken fingers. It offers a number of Masses during the week spoken both in French and English. Unfortunately bad times have their effect, and because of the exorbitant cost of heating the main sanctuary only the basement chapel is used regularly for services. The cathedral really is a wonder, and however out of place it may seem it has taken the heart of Lewiston and many of her visitors.

WHEN COUGHING DROWNS THE PARSON'S SAW: Title is from Love's Labor's Lost, Act V, scene ii, line 911.

SUNDAY MORNING: I can't see Wallace Stevens' version taking place in Lewiston.

MORNING BREAK ON A BREEZY DAY: The speaker is a mill-worker, leaning on a rail outside an iron door overlooking the falls.

PAYDAY: Thanks go to James Taylor for the first line.

THE RITZ: The Ritz Theater is a plush old movie-house near Lower Lisbon that has become the home of Lewiston's most "prestigious" adult films.

HAPPY HOUR: The "happy hour" in fashion at local bars is a terrifying, though lucrative, phenomenon. To me it denotes two obsessions prevalent in society, those for consumption and with time.

THE HAPPINESS: The setting for this poem is entirely feasible. On the "downstream" end of Kennedy Park is a street that on one end provides the place for a large stone Episcopal church, and on the other end there is a bar. Between them are houses, such as the old woman in the poem might live in. The gaudy red-white-and-blue bandstand in the middle of the park is visible from all of these points, as they are from it.

A CIGARETTE: I have been reading a lot of Eliot lately; he is one of my favorite modern poets with whom, I think, I often share a certain tone of desolation and despair. This poem was written after reading his "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," as the first line suggests. Doubtless there are other instances where Eliot's influence shows in a few of these poems.

WHO YOU MAY BECOME: It cannot be forgotten that it is not only the millworkers and laborers who fight against themselves and a difficult world.

L'AIR EPAIS: The title means "The Stifling Air," and the poem is modelled after a Satanic ritual, of the same name, that in turn is based on the rite performed when entering the sixth degree of the Order of the Knight's Templar. In the words of Anton Szandor LaVey, the first priest of the Church of Satan, it "celebrates a reawakening of the flesh and a rejection of past self-denials, and symbolic rebirth is attained through contrived entombment....This is a ritual of the death-defiant....It is a statement of rebirth, of the delights of life as opposed to the negation of death....This is done to emphasize the transition from self-denial to self-indulgence." It is a thoroughly blasphemous rite, from the Christian point of view, but one that is telling of human nature. In the actual ritual, the celebrant, corresponding to the character in the poem, is scourged and lowered into a coffin, which contains a naked woman. After the consummation takes place, it is supposed the celebrant, formerly a martyr or saint, has again reaffirmed his lust and life, and

denied his past renunciations. The man in the poem is a saint only insofar as he selflessly rescued children from a burning car, and reformed his life from a young carouser to an exemplary employee. The hollowness of his life only becomes apparent when he is made the paragon of the good guy in the streets, and it is then that his life begins to fall apart. In the end, he reverts to his old lifestyle in frustration. The poem is constructed as an allegory of the actual ritual; all of its elements correspond to particulars in the rite. The portions set aside in small print are quotations from the actual speeches in the ritual; in the poem they are a sort of subconscious voice. The sections in French are translated into the English ritual like so:

Why am I here? What is the meaning of this? I cannot comprehend the mystery of my presence in this place. It is as if a strange and overpowering summons intrudes upon my rest.

The matter is old and should be forgotten.

The other language is one LaVey calls Enochian. The excerpts in this speech are from the Enochian Keys, which are more or less Satanic psalms used in ritual. Those sections are translated as such:

O ye that range the South and are the lanterns of sorrow, buckle your armor and visit us! Bring forth the legions of the army of Hell, that the Lord of the Abyss may be magnified, whose name amongst ye is Wrath!

O ye swords of the South, which have eyes to stir up the wrath of sin, making men drunken which are empty; Behold! the promise of Satan and His power, which is called amongst ye a bitter sting! Move and appear! Unveil the mysteries of your creation! For I am the servant of the same, your God, the true worshipper of the highest and ineffable King of Hell!

"Shemhamforash!" is the Satanic selah or amen. The entire ritual is not included in the poem, but the poem does follow a similar structure and expresses a similar theme. The Satanic element serves only as a vehicle; the poem itself is not Satanic, though it may be aptly described as having a diabolical character. In the end, it describes the downfall, or the awakening, of a Lewiston man.

A HISTORY LESSON: The part about the great (ad nauseum) uncle is true: I am a direct descendant of Jonathon Harrington, whose crawl to the doorstep and the feet of his family to die is re-enacted each year in Lexington, Massachusetts. But aside from that tid-bit, this is a poem about history and sacrifice, and the perplexity of time and the meaning of life. In the end, we all live and die, for whatever purpose.

AUTUMN: THE RICH, THE SUICIDE, THE DRUG ADDICT, THE POET: About the power of art and expression, as well as the demeaning pursuit for something better, something higher.

THE ANDROSCOGGIN: The Androscoggin River is the reason for Lewiston's existence. First settled in 1770 on a site near the old Continental Mill, the city was born to take advantage of the water power easily afforded by the river. The subsequent utilization of the river by the many mills in Lewiston and upstream took its toll, and not more than a few decades ago the Androscoggin was one of America's dirtiest rivers. It has since been cleaned up immensely, but often one awakes on a humid day with its wrath in the nostrils (as mentioned in "The Source").

SISTER CITIES: The poem is a river.

TAYLOR POND ON THE WAY TO THE JUNK-YARD: Taylor Pond is a pleasant body of water between Auburn and Minot. M & P is a car salvage company in the hills of Minot.

MISTER JOURNALIST, COME TO GREENE: Greene is a poor rural town just north of Lewiston.

BUCKFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Buckfield is a delightful and small rural town a few miles north of Auburn. The building that is the subject of the poem dominates the town, a town otherwise characterized by fields and battered pick-up trucks.

STEEPLES IN SUMNER: This poem is unfinished, part of a longer poem which degenerated into an assinine discourse on steeples, but as a fragment stands on its own. Sumner is an elegant though poverty stricken pastoral town near Buckfield, with a beautiful stream running under the main road.

RANGELEY: Another autobiographical poem. In February of 1981 I loaded my car with a loaf of French bread, a pound and a half of good cheese, a bottle of red wine and two good friends and went to the Rangeley Lakes region one Sunday afternoon. Being winter, it was deserted except for occasional carloads of people on their way to ski Saddleback. We found a beautiful road, Route 17 I think it was, that wound up into the mountains. There was a place on a shoulder overlooking the mountains in a town called Letter D (no kidding!) where we stopped. I wrote poems while one friend sketched and the other wrote a religion paper in the back seat. "Rangeley" is the only poem worth saving from that day, and I think it is my best. Although it is entitled as it is for purposes of identification and association, the actual name of the lake was Mooselookmeguntic.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE: I didn't write this poem; Marsden Hartley did. I include it to introduce the next poem in particular, and the few after that, based on themes of Marsden Hartley, in general. Marsden Hartley was born in Lewiston and lived here fifteen years, before going on to Cleveland, New York, and the world. He was a painter who has gained much recognition in past years, and also wrote a number of fine poems. This particular poem is about his return to Maine after many years abroad; he re-settled around Corea and Ellsworth, and is often called Maine's "native son."

AS MANY LIVES: The epigraph is from a Hartley essay reviewing the work of American painter Carl Sprinchorn, who spent three years painting Maine woods scenes.

"COMING UP INTO THE PICTURE WORLD": I wrote this poem after the opening of the Hartley exhibit at Bates' Treat Gallery in December of 1982. At the opening were discussions about Hartley as Maine's visionary, and a few of the panelists thought he returned not to paint and write about Maine but because he was broke and wanted a little homespun fame. That may be true, but the point I bring up is that whatever the reason, he still produced, still gave from himself what he gave us, and what he gave us is valuable apart from whatever reasons he returned to Maine. It is a moot point to discuss about the artist anything but his art, however inextricable it is from his life. The title is a quotation from Hartley's poem "The Bend of the Androscoggin."

THE GALAXY IN MY BACK YARD: The epigraph is from Hartley's poem "The End."

HANDSOME DRINKS: This poem is in response to a Hartley painting of the same name, painted in 1916. "LUS" and "LOGH" appear in the painting in much the same way they do in the poem; I am unaware of their meaning.

SUMMER CLOUDS AND FLOWERS: Also after a Hartley painting, this one done in 1942. It is a poem about art, and carries a similar message to Stevens' "Anecdote of the Jar."

EIGHT BELLS' FOLLY, MEMORIAL FOR HART CRANE: Hartley and Crane were good friends, and after the latter committed suicide Hartley painted this work in memory of his friend in 1933. The quotations in this poem are from Crane's "Voyages."

ON DONALD LENT'S EXHIBIT, THE SECOND TIME AROUND: Donald Lent, an art professor at Bates, was exhibited at Treat Gallery. His etchings and woodcuts suggested this poem.

THE UNITED NATIONS OF POETRY AND THE CLOUDY NIGHT  
 GETTING COLDER: The "United Nations of Poetry" is an event occasionally held at the home of a Bates English professor, where students and others get together informally to read poetry in a number of different languages. This poem was written just after such an occasion in September 1982.

A LOVE POEM: was inspired by the most perfect rainbow I have ever laid eyes on, somewhere between Durham and Cumberland Center.

WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY, AND HE IS US: I believe the title was first coined by Walt Kelley in his comic strip "Pogo," but I may be mistaken.

PIECING IT TOGETHER: The walking motif comes to fulfillment in this poem, and is an important part of the collection. It is through walking that we learn and gain the natural rhythm in all things, and walking affords us the time and opportunity to observe and to sing.

A SONG AND WALKING TO THE BEAT: To sing is our highest calling, and the act itself the greatest song. In whatever voice, and to whatever audience, this city it sings . . .