

An Elsewhere Rightness
and the clear-headed flavors of days and days.

Stroll with me. Glance back but a little.

And with what unspeakable diffusion
above a game-board fairyland do savors of place --
face upon my face -- tell me I was with me --

Just a calm reflective stroll -- okay? --
without a troubled mind.

-- tell me someone was always with me?
When I gazed into a shell-shop window taken
unknowing to six other seas was I
watching from the future? Someone was -- always
-- in the silence beyond the day. Silence --
passage to places too far away.

Too far.

Beyond the jewel-like lakes the boardwalk the grand
pavilions it resides -- dear flavor that is
ever -- here and there -- marvelous -- then and now.

So near and far.

This exuberance. Well -- my subject
lends itself to leaps. I find that there is simply
no better way to go about it.

It's music -- you see. Oh -- don't
misunderstand: it's not the occasional rhyme.

Rather it's the suggestive
conjunctions -- and -- well -- the exuberance.

The way I figure -- if I keep it up
something just might happen. What do you suppose

might happen here?

Well -- let's go along together.

Look ahead now -- keep going -- stroll -- know
that for years I've glimpsed it hushed -- a silent film
in color faded -- at the pool the fountains gush --
on the boards the people walk -- and see around the circuit
autos -- soundless -- as row boats on all three lakes
lifeguard-whistles at the waves -- wheels against the sky.
If I could -- could only -- fall through that hush.

Surely you grasp a fall through a hush -- or watching
someone from the future -- you've read sci fi --
stranger things than this. As for Elsewhere Rightness --
wait and see -- I want there to be no problem here --
none at all. So just keep moving calmly along now -- fall
through -- if only we could -- could only. Recall
the silence -- do -- but sounds galore there were indeed.

Come listen:

Here reaching deep into a golden expanse --
an embrace of place just beyond our hearts unfocused
the vista of busy blocks will chant: At first
a whispering mile-wide -- whisper whispering rises
splinters into prattling crystallizes
joy -- vacation voices -- summery chattering. Then
from one side -- Daisy Daisy -- tinny tiny spray of funny
music -- I'm half crazy -- pops and pops -- love of
you -- lots of them lots -- ding -- shrieks -- patter of
feet a thousand strolling on the boards beneath us.

Day is long and bigger than the sky.

White coconutty beach-cream scents sea-salts and
like pink clouds promising diversions
celestial a sniff of spun sugar. Diversions -- yes

-- celestial -- you'll know just what I mean --
so please continue strolling as we
enter days of world at rest with far far kingdoms
etched in sky beyond us -- yes:

Grand Pavilions skill-games wheels -- carousels
souvenirs of sea -- fish-nets shells
telescopes and captains' bells allow us glimpses
past the present view -- transport us to
the Grove -- picture-castles parks parades -- to
Elsewhere-lands a block or so away.

A block or so and then some.

Loose your cares among the decked-out crowds
the wood-warmth -- ocean-wafted -- as we -- awe-enchanted
no longer weary -- venture forth and into a single day
stroll by castles bandstands lakes and copper pavilions --
take our place within the pageantry of swans.

So here we are -- into the vision.
This Elsewhere-thing you'll be a master at if you
follow me without a care -- don't look back
or furrow your brow an instant -- do relax -- for
you're to see it all appearing -- boardwalk
theaters boats arcades -- much the same as hearing
a certain smiling music -- something dear
reflecting life. Something.

Here.

Now -- go get a drink -- if you wish --
no problem here -- none at all -- and then come along
to the south-east corner -- there where the
OCEAN BREATHEs
and a copper-green giant sprawls across the boardwalk.
You must take on this place -- this deco pachyderm we call
the South Pavilion. Walk through its great Arcade:

Here beside its carousel crown the Arcade hosts
a boardwalk throng that passes through
this faded hollow of rippling water reflections.

Here carousel sounds the steps the scuffs
the voice-shards disembodied plangent float to rafters
to gulls through powdery luminescence of a soaring
thousand windows -- triangular wing per boardwalk side
-- some gothic idea of antique science fiction.
Here the scent -- the odor of arcade -- the aged paint
never dried salted by the sea the ride-grease
roasted nut are all a candy apple coating of the ages.
How well stored in us this place. It is we -- yes
-- we -- much as a nation's monuments can be.

OCEAN BOOMS

Now forget the South Pavilion. I mean --
don't think about it. You'll return another day.

By the time I leave your side much else
of great glory will have passed before your eyes.

And behind them too.

You'll see.

Walk west a block. At our left the skinny strip
of Southern Lake -- at our right the Amusement Palace
with its Ferris wheel and our second carousel
pass as we pass breathing deep toward a special spot:

Now beside the Moorish Castle look across
the narrow lake at the stucco wall:
short frilly bridges pedal-boats a swan transporting
children and beyond them the fair green banks
Victorian houses of the other town reside on -- hear
'A Bicycle Built For Two' -- carousel-joy

in the wheel's revolving shadow -- Palace go-round
twirling there -- where mazes of pleasure
dark and arcane are found.

Back where lake and boardwalk meet
an Egyptian obelisk and a fancy white hotel that
leaps the weathered boards -- we see
the first jeweled horses -- round and round --
those inside the copper-green crown
with a thousand colored swirling lights -- hear
'East Side West Side all around the' --
Hold on -- put another castle --
farther back -- a white one -- just behind
its Spanish-Moorish friend -- it too
holds the worlds the present spot entails -- who
knows how many have passed this way? --
makes shady the side street quiet cool and gray.

Now silence. We think: We
listen to the days and days of life
shut down. No one here -- nothing much to glimpse
but the crisp blown leaves of far-off years.

OCEAN BOOMS

That wasn't what I wanted:
I should have said so much to glimpse.

Oh well. We'll keep it. Understand -- a degree of
belief is necessary in order to lay
the foundation. Pictures to assimilate -- sights
as sturdy pillars that support.

They'll sit behind your back one day
Behind your eyes I mean.

Okay.

Let's wipe our brows -- turn
to face black wrought-iron arabesques
on the towering copper doors.
Let's pull one open -- pull it hard:

Deep in those luminous noons
of sea and stiff wood-turbaned seers -- majestic
darkened pools that were the picture castles.
Columns candied aquarium lights
tortuous candelabra hush
the candy counter on the Persian rug -- you
off your seat on stairs of marble
the reverberating underwater voices of giants
urging you back to where
Switzerland might be or a hotel in Japan
or a cab the middle of gay Paree.
Now above you in the twilight ceiling sky
in the blue of Giotto's biblical heavens
clouds drift by and can disclose
the twinkling of a star. For the orange sun has
faded out -- gone off to Elsewhere Land
beyond the western crests
now shadowdrawn with lanterns and slender soaring
minarets. A roll of the tympano a fanfare
golden with solarity: reopen
skid the shimmering drapes. You king or queen
not knowing at all
you're alive right now and here.

Do not exit the theater. Leave your royal blue seat
and follow me through curtains of Chinese red
and along the mezzanine to the big granite staircase.
Go down to a lower step -- look into the lobby
and through two sets of those tall frilled-iron doors.
You can see Southern Lake across the street.
Let's remain here -- a minute. Relax -- sit on a step

if you want to. Now sip your drink and listen:

Maybe you -- like me -- are a lover of old maps:

You point and declare -- 'Here we are!'

Perhaps -- Stroller -- you have known this same
exuberance by simply being in a place --
thrilled at grasping your relation to the universe:

All at once the world you stood in struck
music -- and you all arms and legs and syllables.

No? Then much we'll make of music later on.

The Elsewhere Music.

You can stay here on the staircase -- you can
go for a walk through the South Pavilion.
Who knows? -- you might meet someone interesting
on the boardwalk. You know where it is.
You never can tell what adventure you'll have.

Anything can happen. Indeed:

Next we execute an unnatural maneuver
to the other side of Town. It's not so far -- just
north eight blocks. Feel your soles arch
on pavement. Arch -- relax. Think of where you are.

Arch -- there -- excellent! -- you've
done it: See far below us troops of sailor-suited
grand hotels -- to our right the boardwalk's
bordering-arcades and rides -- yet another pavilion
-- the 'North' we call it -- jutting out above
the blue. See inland to green: the turrets of homes
-- of lodges too -- sticking out like thorns.

If we could -- Stroller -- could only.

On the first block south of Northern Lake
we land -- find ourselves before
a tall brick facade -- its arch -- we enter --
a booth -- we pay -- and just beyond
huge iron turnstiles resembling Medieval torture --
columns portholes a plumbing smell with a dash of salt
reverberating voices. Another arch and a glimpse
ice blue -- outdoor-bright turbulent alive
-- 'The World's Largest Pool.'

Sportive green the boardwalking around it
painted in the sun will never lose its scent -- real
imagined -- air its summer salt -- deck chairs
their fruity circus hues.

Everywhere you look a scene cool and blue of feeling
freshness splashing fountains plashing colors
coral vacations -- aquamarine.

Now skip a dip for a spell -- ascend -- stand atop
the shielding brick facade where sunners lie --
overlook to beach across the avenue -- left to view
our Northern Lake and a world of mansions
on great green lawns.

Now past the largest White Hotel -- broad-shouldered
window-filled -- we gaze -- past North Pavilion
blocks of inns where the other side of town is told
in a stroke of Southern Lake -- microscopic
in tiny turning Ferris wheel and Moorish Castle top.

Let me ask you what I know:

Is it that I reside above the age of days
that nearby peninsular hamlets -- nestled wooded zones
the musty boardfloor shades of five-and-tens --
skyward here arrive from far away -- and yet so near --
to tell me that I'm home?

Only now can I play the joy it was -- a world
in every angle -- ocean world that should have never
gone away -- or at least have left more living
than it does -- oh well -- today.

That's all right. I'll leave it.

Perhaps you did take a walk to the boardwalk.

You can still go there -- if you wish.

Or you might like a dip in the marvelous pool.

Two other pools -- you must know this --
provide a placid change from ocean waves -- one
on boardwalk -- south a block -- the other
in a small pavilion only four blocks down from that.

Then there's a pool in old Wesley Grove --
across our Southern Lake. You know where that is.

If anything can happen
what do you suppose might happen
in light of all we have?

OCEAN -- across the street -- BOOMS

Let's see. You might enjoy the cool water
on this sultry summer day. You might enjoy a good
conversation -- meet someone fall in love even
get married. Just stand there if you wish --
imagine what might come about -- you could ponder
the present or tomorrow and tomorrow.

Wade there -- bob
in the swimming blue of pool and sky.
Forget or remember -- be
transformed -- fashion your destiny.

Look -- a butterfly.

Now -- whenever you're ready:

The North Pavilion shares the scent of the South

the sounds the light its wider space --
walls of Virgin Mary blue all trimmed with white
new offerings reveal -- an exhibition hall
and a picture castle -- biggest darkest of them all.

Venetian frostings pendants plaques
sea-green horses shells in air delight -- as arcade
echoes beyond the doors -- brings somehow
things not in sight.

Sea resounds under skirting promenades
and we stand in tangy breezes next to elders
braced in deck chairs -- squint across
the double-scalloped beach to the good old
South Pavilion

that future Duomo thing right out of
Granddad's science fiction.

Years ago -- now in fact -- Columbus lands below
confers with natives -- smiles up -- here we
thrill to the mysteries of growing older -- fixed
in ordinary fares -- while joys of place live
on and on and tint us as we weave our way through
flapping-flag parades -- sea-vast days --
marshmallow clouds -- cast a touch of Europe -- of
America the most -- everywhere.

Across arcade to that other dark domain
we go. Here the grandest subaqueous world is slashed
gold and black and purple -- a place that
shares its life with the Moorish one and others too
an easy stroll away -- that here with there
perfumes of many years enjoin -- as anywhere in town
the blessed breathing personal array
of days and places a thousand and one excite:
Here the salty carpets -- freshness of the castle air
-- all that popcorn in arty deco darkness
sweet flat refreshment-drinks -- eternity's affair!

How many flecks of life
flicker in this tonic? How does it make itself

all in all?

Wait awhile. Take a breather.

Forever all in all.

Yes.

Behold the Music that arises
from evaporated things.

I try -- stroller -- but
an essence -- a sense of Truth I tell you
-- haunts evaporated things.

This is what I go through -- have been
going through for years.

Anyway -- let's stay calm -- relax.

Let's remain inside the great North pavilion.
It's pleasant isn't it? Interesting place -- huge --
an enormous relic of another age. Sense it do you?
What might have happened in that age?

Happened.

Go out in mind on the wind-fresh promenade.
Rest in a green weathered deck chair.
Look at the beach -- South Pavilion opposite.
People around at present -- the boards
colorfully crowded -- the chatting promenade-folk
pretending -- perhaps -- they're on a deck
of the White Star Line. Get bold -- one more time:
Make it winter -- winter in our minds:

People vanish.

Winter.

Suddenly the ocean sounds louder -- the gulls

squee -- your breathing head larger.

There you are -- all by yourself -- absorbing
cold bright vastness of the day. What happens next?

Sense it do you? Sense something?

OCEAN BOOMS

That's really all I wanted you to try.

Back to summer -- if you please --
back to Southern Lake -- Amusement Palace.

And here we are.

Up --

right up through the ceiling
outside up. Striped awning sunred shady --
Southern Lake across the street's a long blue banner
at our feet -- white wall its stripe -- Victorians
of the rickety Grove trinkets. Oh -- the ocean air is
great. Up up tippy top high as the Moorish castle
at our right we go up up -- look left a block
at the copper-green crown -- at the boardwalk ocean
clouding sky. Oh look -- could we have said it? -- turn
around -- see from here to border's Northern Lake
eight blocks away -- quick. Down down -- here we go we go
down -- gulped through the roof near the firing range
to the gravelly straightaway alley -- here we glide
down smoothly we go straight straight-away we go we go
quick past the lever boy's high-top sneakers.

Up -- here we go up we go -- up up
right through the ceiling again -- here we go
outside -- the lake the Grove -- we're
up up tippy top -- here we stop.

We swing.

The sun goes in
now cooler ocean air.

Just relax and have a look around.

Believe

that our Department Store tower --
four blocks past the Moorish campanile --
tells the time it told when new
back in 'twenty-two.

Conceptual clock -- tan sunbathed mold
under Renaissance roof -- ticks
tocks -- for the first time in its life.

'Oh the color of the day!'

-- we declare --

'and from this spot how pictures
in the magic castles do tint
everything -- how places so far away
cling to the old white wall --
to the sound of our carousals -- Paris
Saint Petersburg Hong Kong Cathay
and Venice -- Venice too.'

Rather -- let's don't declare.

Not too loudly.

Here we go.

Round and round now down down
here we go down -- down perhaps for good.
The ride all over -- the lightness of the earth --
the rightness is everywhere to feel and in us seeing
saving saying for much later -- ever holding
a dream that rises like an incense

of impossible delight.

Uh oh.

Labyrinth
dark and arcane
cardboard attic smell
very black
only
amusement sounds
outside
remaining pictures
inside
of the day that's left in mind.
And here you are alone
in here
for the first time in your life
quashing body bumps
treading squeaky sinking planks
completely on your own.
Suddenly
the fortune teller
her stiff arm slowly sweeping
a card finger
her face
not caring at all
about any earthly thing.
You creep ahead
palming smooth black walls
find yourself in jail
as expected
alone
in jail but knowing
one rubber bar -- just one
is the secret to escape
but wondering -- still wondering

will it really work?

All alone it does

at last

even for you

it does

alone.

Thrilling you turn

and slip into a turret -- from

its window allurements

outside call: the bubble bounce

fire-red Rock-O-Plane

the amusement fury just below.

An archway

and you're outside now for real

on a wobbly old bridge

stumbling along

the castle's gray facade

as people look up.

Another arch

and scattered pops

explosions of air-breaks

screams recede.

You're walking walking

in darkness now

tingling

relax against a beam

watch blue lights in rafters like

strange off-stage eyeballs

powdering the pitch.

"Here I am" -- you whisper -- "here

I am" -- alone -- summer day

I know you're just beyond

and "here I am."

People coming laughing

in rooms behind you

nearing.

Now you're going up
then down -- up up again
the floor revolves around a bend
you hold the handrail
leap
are on the other side.
Dark as hell.
"What direction do I face?"
You hear the Tunnel-of-Love that goes
through the mouth of an ape
roar something
far away
while in a lancet window view
a girl and a pretty babe.
But tungsten yellow turns to violet
the infant now to devil
his pretty mother
to witch.
You're walking walking.
Darkness.
Will it ever end?
Yes
colored lighting
pink
lots of pink
You know it -- know
what great pink world is this.
A long and tilted room
aglow with pinks and purples.
You walk-fall to
the other side
go slam against a wall.
What is the source
of its strange illumination?
Around a bend
and you'll be nearly free.

Portholes now
give on the turning carousel
The Travels of Marco Polo
the alley base of the Ferris wheel
and soon you're really out
feeling fine feeling fine playing
catchpenny games
innocent of the loves acquired
for he soul's many voyages
castles and medinas
serpentine.

I call it The Travels of Marco Polo.
A series of diversions that come and go --
far away mysterious as the East --
here a bamboo mystery room -- there an island's
ancient idols. Things not present --
the Elsewhere intimations -- the Sinbad-voyages
three lakes boardwalk castles -- not just
bamboos brass gongs Bedouins -- delight the eye.
Squiggly Chinese music: Delirious through
reds and golds we pass -- incensations -- sweet
amusement lumber -- cedar pine. Looking up
in a tower of cool white plaster -- to a cut-out
window way above -- where any place could be
beyond the faint faint skylight dust of day on white:
Other lands and other times arrive -- even
future ones -- in pavilions of ribbed glass where
young folks whom we think we know --
and who we wish could know us too -- continue
with their noisy fun. I believe
I've found a clue for us in the cut out window
up above -- an important reverie that
made me miss old Kubali Khan.
But all is fast in the Elsewhere world
of rides and minds -- and our car slams through

and out -- the Bubble Bounce before us
jellied apples in the air.

Take a break.

Let's go over there -- get something to eat.
See -- right over there -- in
the shadow of carousel's jewel-jangling song.
A couple of hot dogs if you please.

Now: A down-to-earth chat.
You've come on this stroll for reasons
only you can know. Yet I think
no one's so different from all other folks
that shared motives do not exist.
I suspect on your part desires to witness
things uncommon -- to be stirred
in various ways -- be 'taken somewhere.'
Oh yes -- just a little more
relish -- good -- that's fine -- thanks.

Relish.

Sorry -- I was studying the condiment.
That color -- the green.
Anyway -- as I was saying -- you have
your reasons for being here.
You must understand that things may not be
what you expect -- things --
broad identities -- I mean -- like what
you are sure to experience
when -- for example -- you go on a trip:
the 'tripness' of it.
Of course you do not expect a trip
to be like listening to a symphony -- though
a symphony's a kind of voyage --

nor do you expect your novel to resemble
a trip to a museum -- though
a novel can be full of wonderful things.

But I dare say you might like it
if the hot dog you are chewing acquired
once the essence of ballet --
or if the music of the carousel suddenly
tasted like your hot dog.

In fact you might very well wish to purchase
a recording that sounded like
the way a museum looks -- and if the museum's
essence was that of a novel --
and the novel's that of trip to Japan --
and your trip to Japan was
just like a talk on the philosophy of mind
you might find it good listening.

Okay.

Now for a new consciousness-safari.
We'll focus on people -- my
shaping mind included -- just a tad.

Take that lady with the little girl
by the photo booth: There's
a familiar thing about the woman: I know her
but I don't: red hair piled
sprayed in place -- black and white outfit
bag of patent leather -- seems
she's just come out of church. I've seen her
throughout entire my life -- but
in no place I can say: I mean she belongs
to Town all over -- fits I'd guess
my grandmothers sphere -- is most likely
Italian -- plays bingo
knows six or seven people my family knows.

Now -- over there -- look:
the skinny guy behind the firing range: his
short-sleeve shirt just short
of Hawaiian -- blond close-cropped hair.
I must have seen this fellow
every week in the same old spot -- though
I do not recall doing so
before a certain date: There came a day --
a particular moment -- when I felt
I'd known him all my life
without ever having noticed him before.

It simply happened.

Let's walk our dogs in this direction --
by the doors that give on Southern Lake -- near
the foot of our old Ferris wheel.

Turn around.

See the folks catching carousel rings.
I recall the first time I tried it and succeeded:
a reaching-hand -- a polo shirt of thick blue stripes
-- a grammar-school photo of my face. At once
I was admitted to a whole new world.

Then there are the mystery shots:

Look over there -- just
across the street by the light blue railing
of our narrow Southern Lake.
Something happened here -- I'm not sure what:
I see myself leaning at the rail
with Favorite Uncle and a friend of his --
leaning -- looking -- as early
evening flourished alive with pearly lights.

That's all the scene I can recall --
but I picture it from where we stand -- here
across the street -- as if
I'd absorbed it through the eyes of another.

Likewise a scene with Uncle
and Favorite Cousin -- Cousin Nick -- near
the bumper-cars entrance: I
recall the sight from the Tunnel-of-Love.

There's one on the lake too --
in a U-pedal boat: It's an iridescent Seurat
memory of the day-blue canal
strewn with yellow crafts -- me pedaling --
but studied from the Ferris Wheel.

Something happened.

I have lots of these shots -- all over Town.
Myself in two places at once.

But enough of this for now -- let's
try to save a few steps with a new experiment.

Right behind us we have another
glass-eyed fortune-teller with crystal ball.

Drop in a dime and watch her stir
woodenly in her gold and mulberry satins -- over
her oracle lean -- face locked afar.

We want to look at lakes. What we need
is vision in our vision.

I see clouds.

Ah -- a picture in the crystal. Move in
closer. What's that? It's
a butterfly -- but not what we are after --

not right now at any rate.

There now -- look -- what can it be? -- maybe
-- well -- no -- I'm sorry -- it's
our pavilions -- in a breakdown state -- a lot
of yellow dirt were the Moorish Castle
was -- I mean -- is -- and --
well -- there are -- the lakes -- but
not as I wanted you to see them -- they are --
hold it -- there's a person -- he's
familiar I would say -- swings a tan valise
-- appears to be -- indeed -- in
the bus station -- two blocks west of here.
He swings a tan valise -- and
except for his arm is as stiff as our seer.
I like this a lot.

I believe he could be the person
all strollers wait for -- a being born
to live and make live -- not just walk around.

For now -- in lieu of whatever
the young man will do -- we'll use his form
to see his special content.
Zoom in -- quickly -- yes -- there we go --
let's look into his eyes -- eyes --
brown eyes -- closer -- closer still -- one eye
filling our clearing crystal sphere --
brown eyes -- blessed with the bluest water.

He holds all our healthy lakes:
the North -- the South -- and the little one
in the middle -- a oversized
pond in fact this last one and the other two
our panoramic borders.

They're neighborhood lakes for the most part:
Just step out your front door
and you're there.

The Northern starts at Ocean Street

at the beach -- and soon --
a half mile more or less -- breaks to branches
four to start -- that curl around
woody boroughs clustered peninsular towns
with stubby main streets
depots firehouses -- mansions -- all inside
a mile west or so -- that
canoers feel sylvan days away from sea.
Eight blocks down the Ocean Street you come to
Southern Lake -- beside us here --
a thin blue gash -- canal of sorts -- that begins
at boardwalk -- stops at Main -- just
four blocks running half the length of Town --
a lake whose olden whitewashed wall
and bridgelets to the Grove span many worlds
whose pleasure-banks towers
castles sport -- whose shades of exotic
journeys -- on pedal-boats and a big white swan
-- must do something grand behind
a child's open stare.
Little Middle Lake has seven cupcake islets
each overgrown with strong old trees --
each great haven for ducks and swans -- starts
a block or so west of North Pavilion --
ends three blocks hence not quite at Main --
in a bordering park -- this little
front-lawn lake and old-time pond -- watched
by handsome houses -- a lazy rower's
Avalon dream.
These are the glistening boundaries
of an oriental miniature -- a game-board world
where blessed we feel to be:
Wherever we stroll around these parts
-- footloose crossing little bridges
lakes and lakes -- we feel this place of places
just had to be.

Clouds again in the guy's brown eyes.

A sunset. Have you ever seen
the sun sink beyond Southern Lake -- water
orange-black and little bridges
darkly silhouetted?

In winter when the beachfront's down
a thrilling might root you
lonely away -- which is to say you are
present but flex your spirit
in sand-bright light that has withdrawn
on the wheel of the year.

The aloneness.

Let me tell you that this feeling
persists -- day or night
in winter or summer -- nowadays.

Oh well.

I'll try not to dwell on -- well -- break
vision -- reader -- stroller --
but the vanished keeps on coming back --
I mean -- it stays that way.

Vanished.

Observe the crystal ball:

Weekday ripens -- and something will return
beyond lakes' orange hour kindle
palace panes roll out a carpet on the boards:
a summer ocean evening of spectacle.
And as on Saturdays the beachfront soon will
grow within its festival of night:
Those arriving circle circuit in their cars --
ride jeweled mares -- investigate

the boards -- or stop and just sit out the wait
in picture castles' who-knows-where.
I see a two-film day that runs from afternoon
to evening -- first in the Moorish
then in another -- not its great white brother
but the pink-halled Precious
half a short block toward the beach. Cities
foreign we'll float to
swathed in dusk of luminous blue
the inscrutable arches curtained booming
voices filling hollow rise
to theater-heaven ceiling-in-the-sky
watch mammoth film-folk flicker looming.
I believe it must have been
the South China Sea's spice-laden ships
drifting right from screen
to Southern Lake that stayed there made
towers to the setting sun
in colonies of crystal East and West
within the years of giant fun.
No doubt it was some wondrous adventure:
Professor Von Hardwigg in his
Scotland lab antique -- the mysterious
rock that led the man to seek
a journey to the center of the earth. Oh how
thrilling that a sunny spear
dawning through a cleft in Sneffels Mount
would mark the ingress once a year.
Our explorers triumphant we
hop from serious Moor to smiling Precious --
outside a grape-hued stucco slab with
awnings pagoda-roofed pea-green tile -- inside
a lobby pink and huge in mirrors -- stairs
of beveled glass to peachy tones of narrow halls
we climb to wait in Latin Quarters
lantern-dim near walls of charcoal sketches.

It's all -- you see -- a kind of tidal
hymn behind the eyes that vocalizes silently.

'This is only a small
experimental model. To carry a man
a larger edition is needed.'

'To carry a man? Where?'

'Into the past or into the future. This --
gentlemen -- is a time machine.'

At eight-fifteen we're
in the present once again -- the beachfront
seized -- warm -- overflowing --
horns -- ice cream cones -- boardwalk nearly
impossible -- still determined
claim a spot on North Pavilion's promenade.

"Now about those movies."

But tail of white straight up into the night
and ocean-awe from sea-crowd
flash of light -- percussion -- then
sky gems red white blue green sprinkle twinkle
down upon another Fourth
and right now more than ever new
with half-remembered movies we've collected
storing humors more than true.

Look -- there -- she's given us
our fortune -- take it from the metal slot
and read it -- read it aloud.

"ELSEWHERE."

Ah! -- you will hear a lot of this --
grand piece of it in fact -- what our matter is.

Look -- there he goes -- our brown-eyed
newborn vanishing in the sphere -- and still he
swings his tan valise.

Our matter -- yes -- and you must
tend the marble that assists in its creation
-- glimpse the music behind his eyes.

But not only his.

It's behind the bushy eyebrows
of Mr. Carr over there -- who crosses street
in his square gray suit and fedora hat.
Hands in his pockets -- he talks to good ol'
Mike D'Amato -- the fuel-oil guy
who has filled our tank for years. Mr. Carr
has a broad-shouldered business manner
and the crest of a wave in his hair to match.

In my mother's teenage years he was
a teacher at Town High -- is I think the current
principal. I heard he helps his wife
with her real estate firm in the summer months.

The fact that these men are acquainted with
each other is all a part of it -- that
I have never seen them together before but am
not surprised by their friendship --
is a part of it too -- a measure of the song.

It's behind the eyes of Mike.

Mike collects photos of himself
with celebrities -- jumps into the scene
with a grin on his round face:
Mike with Frank -- with Liz -- with Dean.
They're framed above the bottles
at his cousin's bar and grill: Mike in tux
with fuchsia tie and handkerchief.
He's amazed -- and he can go on about it
whenever he sees my family --

that the little boy whose head got stuck
between the frilly bridge-rails
of Southern Lake -- my Favorite Uncle --
and whom he helped pull out --
would someday be beside him in a frame.

You'll find Favorite Uncle
in other shots on the walls of other stores
in neighboring towns: In the pizzeria
in Wanalasset -- in the bait-and-tackle shop
in Maplehurst. He smiles at you
in the Dale Beach Drug Store too -- from
way above the best cigars.

It's behind the eyes of Uncle:
Recently he wept when we gave him a photo
of the Moorish Castle Theater.

That's how it is.

Now you must know that Town is more than
a magical beachfront -- it is
a real town -- better than that in fact.
I'll show you what I mean:
I've planned to take another down-to-earth
walk -- a saunter to a spot
three or so blocks west of here. We'll take
Lane Avenue -- that's the street
on the other side of the Amusement Palace.

This avenue leads downtown.
It's one of the very few streets that
isn't perfectly straight.
This fact -- I came to discover -- I mean
-- will come to discover -- irked
Town's Founder -- A. Illos Bradfield --

the A is for Adam -- who portioned things out
back in 1871. His bronze monument's
in Little Flower Park -- that's the block between
North Pavilion and Little Middle Lake.

His proud statue holds a foot rule -- in life
his trademark. It reminded folks that
he was the one who measured out the world.

When he was not instructing his
'Ark Angels' in the banishment of 'beer arks'
-- travelling wagons that sold the brew --
he was on the boards swinging his rule --
chatting with visitors and making sure bathers
did not splash water on the sand.

He wanted his resort to
'grow straight' -- and while Town was not
as strictly religious as the village
of Wesley Grove -- Bradfield
made sure only the 'right kind of people'
would visit his shores: No
rowdies -- no hawkers -- and if a lady
refused to wear the bulky required
bathing suit -- it was curtains for her.

Now right over here's the monument
to local boys who fell in World War One --
and the wide intersecting street
is Church Avenue. Church holds the finest
ecclesiastical architecture around.

Nice trees too.

Ah -- here we are: Lane Avenue
proper -- in front of our Department Store.
Look at the people -- will you?
Men and women in hats -- the women wearing
white gloves. They're all so --
you understand it's that -- sorry it's -- well

I was staring at that travel poster
in the Drugstore across the street -- Visit
Pompeii it says -- Ha! Anyway
we're going to space out before we zero in.

Recall the beachfront: You
don't see it now -- but you know it's there.

That's important. All things
unseen but outside the present are crucial
in relation to what we have at hand:
You can look down the little cross-street
here to Southern Lake where
one of its bridgelets jumps to Wesley Grove
and feel a beach in everything.

I ask -- What do you suppose
might happen in this spot? Do you suppose
something might happen here?

Things did happen here -- I have pictures
of myself in my mind to prove it:
me looking at myself from across the street
-- from up the block. Right here
I said hi to Heather Wilton -- a pretty girl.
It's -- I see my -- smile -- my --

No -- it's not the Pompeii poster -- it's
that man swinging the tan valise.
He keeps returning -- to my mind -- he
swings his valise and is either
waiting for a bus or has stepped off one.

These things come to me sometimes.
Anyway -- let's continue with
our usual view of Town at the moment.

Town.

And contiguous now illuminations
of fancy felt not seen in a world we know
is out there. Few blocks east
go-rounds twirl and sing -- people splash
too far to reach but always with us.

Town.

It spans all seasons.

Streets -- we've more fine streets:

Church Avenue's broad with springtime trees
-- it parts our graceful hotel zone's
Victorians colonials -- lies nearly in between
beachfront routes and Main --
offers Gothic Romanesque and Byzantine
great temples of old stone. Stained glass we see
in the library across the park as well
and all the way down Church. A drive that vaults
Little Middle -- Church crosses Lane
the shopping street -- runs quickly then to meet
the northern side of Southern Lake.
Lane's a Main itself we say -- not wide or long
and not exactly straight -- runs up
from Real Main east and west
to end at South Pavilion Place. A few blocks
in advance of beach our favorite stores
line Lane: the Five and Dime
-- plump gold letters on red its sign --
Pharmacy -- Tribune Building -- Department Store
-- its clock the tower you've seen on high
some time before.
Main itself stripes the center of our world --
along with train tracks comes on down

from bridge of winding Northern Lake -- after role
in smaller towns -- runs full
eight blocks to Southern right where Southern ends
and thence to lower coastal bends --
along its way passing Little Middle Park --
North Depot's tiny russet ark nearby and flying on
to noble Major Station -- brick red charm
at foot of Lane -- past the Post across the street
imposing arch-faced dignified.

Across Main on the western side we soar
checkerboard broad home Avenues -- seashore colonials
posted porches too and lawns and lawns and pines
maples sycamores galore -- a couple of olden
red brick schools -- steeples and sudden candy stores.

In this mile squared of earthy sphere
life lived on with the sea beside us -- pavilions
castles towers arcades -- far and out there
ever near -- echoing seasons forever in our minds:
all places -- all at once -- the magic
of countless summertimes.

Yes -- I know -- it's something like
a musical: The guy suddenly
breaks into song. Or maybe it's like
the popcorn you've just
got to eat -- the clay that you've just
got to knead into a being.

Better still -- it's like
having to dress a wound -- take a cure.

Yes -- that's it.

Now -- did you wonder
why a town that's only eight blocks wide
has two train stations --

the Major one and small North Depot?
Well -- the holy village of Wesley Grove
shares Major Station with Town -- and
in olden days the Grovers wouldn't hear of
work inside in their borders
on Sundays -- never mind that the station's
not in the Grove at all: Pulling
a lever to stop a train that dropped people off
at Wesley Grove was surely work -- and
Methodists wouldn't have it.

Imagine: Those thousands of Town tourists
who should be resting too!

So the North depot was a compromise.
Till only a few years back an ordinance forbid
the driving of a car in Wesley Grove
on Sundays. This was because in buggy-days
riding your horse meant
eventually you'd have to hitch your horse
and hitching your horse was work.

The car-empty streets were great to stroll.
Everybody misses that.

Recently the Grove erected gates
on its little bridges amid much controversy.
They're locked at night -- every night
-- not just on Sundays.

But now I've done it again -- breaking
the vision -- shucks -- to pieces.
Remember: We can wander the carless streets
of Welsey Grove if we wish to.
I tell you no metal gates impede our stroll.
We can walk the boards at midnight
right here in Town -- if this is our desire.

Limber up. Flap your hands.

**Let's sense the air around us. Listen
to the traffic here on Lane --
the good kind of traffic -- its called
'hustle and bustle.'**

**Everything's in its place: the blocks
of shoulder-to-shoulder stores --
streetlights -- wastebaskets -- decals
on the pharmacy window
that advertise the soda fountain.**

**Look down the side street
to Southern Lake -- at the Victorians
together pastel across it.**

**Do you think something might happen here
under these conditions?**

**Suppose we listened to some music -- say
a symphony -- and you liked
what you heard -- no -- you reveled in it.**

**While its harmonies impart
not a single clear emotion -- I mean
-- nothing you can manage
to articulate -- certain chords confide
that at any moment an occurrence
beyond fabulous may come into the world.**

**Certain days are like that too.
Days can be broad in sense -- like music.**

**Something may very well happen here -- so
let's linger awhile in these parts.
I'll wait right here in case you have to
go to the bathroom or something.
There's one inside the Department Store.**

Wait around.

The music's shortly to arrive.

But did I mention Heather Wilton?
In eighth grade I thought she was the most
beautiful girl in Town -- perhaps
in the whole world:

She was so -- how to say? --
normal-looking. She looked a lot like
a miniature Doris Day.

I had always been a reluctant magnet
for eccentric students: Every
acne-misfit wanted to be my friend --
which is why I suppose
the sight of Heather was fascinating.

It was right in front
of the Pharmacy that I saw her one day
as I wheeled my bike
around the corner. I gave her
a knowing smirk and she smirked back.

I can still see my smile: It
looks like a giant deformity -- an odd
tumor resembling a boomerang.

My mother used to park
behind the Five-and-Dime -- by the lake.

I recall that one day on
exiting the car I noted how beautiful
the scene was. It was like
somewhere else. I know that this observation
came about a day after the Heather
incident -- for I remember walking from Lake
to Pharmacy on the outside chance
she might still be standing in front of it.

She wasn't.

I glimpsed her less in high school
because of the increase in students -- many
from neighboring communities.
I noticed she looked less happy than usual
-- haggard actually -- a condition
I put down to the fact that she was no longer
the prettiest girl around.
In time she gained weight and grew jowls.

Still -- I can't drive past the back
of the Five-and-Dime -- what's
left of it -- without thinking of Doris Day.
It's a split-image -- somehow half
at the Pharmacy up the block -- and half
by the lazy Southern lagoon --
a gold-glowing arc of summertime vitality
that is -- well -- here and there.
Naturally the theaters -- which were -- are
-- a few blocks away and which contain
the 'real' Doris -- assist the phenomenon.

Oh -- look -- there's my grandmother
in her green-and-white
Flash-Gordon Olds. See? She's stopped
for the light there. Nubbie
and her sister Frattie are with her.
These two ladies are related
to us -- they're cousins I believe but are
connected in a way I always forget.
The sisters have Brillo haircuts and are
shaped like little diving bells.
Often they are seized by fits of laughter
-- Nubbie in particular -- who --
like all her eight nick-named siblings --

loves to tell comical stories.

If you hear a long phlegmy wheeze -- you
know that's Nubbie laughing.

If Frattie is present -- she'll laugh along
and run into you with her shoulder
much in the manner of a football player.

Grandma's turning the corner now -- let's
wave. No -- they don't see us.

Nubbie's laughing -- her eyes plum-closed
in the manner of Louis Armstrong.

Yes -- her sister likes to get physical:

Once -- in the Five-and-Dime --

Nubbie told a joke to my grandfather --
a rather course yarn about

a shifty merchant named Lavictus who sold
faulty goods to two uncouth men.

A nun was supposedly telling the tale --
and the punch-line involved

her naive quotation of the 'Latin' words
she heard the two men speak:

Lavictus fuctus.

While Nubbie was phlegming it up -- Frattie
threw herself at my grandfather --

who stepped aside at the very last moment:

She overturned a flimsy rack

of candy bars -- which nearly overturned
Father Gubbio -- our parish priest -- who was
apparently lurking behind it.

'Ooo -- Frattie' -- Nubbie whispered later
as they scuffed out of the store -- 'you think
he heard Lavictus fuctus?'

Nubbie says she confessed to him
that she told a dirty joke -- just in case

he indeed had overheard it.

I still need to stand here a moment. Better
yet -- let's move around the corner
of the building -- on the side street here
next to the Tribune Building.

Ah yes.

I love the effect of being in the shade
with a sunny place visible
beyond: It's like viewing another world --
like seeing a kind of harmony.

Sense it do you?

There's a tingling that silvers the veins.
I've always called it -- perhaps
too broadly -- the Glow -- this tingle-thrill.
I know several variations -- each
with greater and lesser degrees of robustness.
The greater -- the more Glow.
The present variety is thin and high pitched.

I'm going to 'count upon it': "One two
three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven."
I stop at eleven -- it tells me
I've done what I can with the joy. I can stop
because everybody in the world
has just experienced the same beautiful thing
by virtue of my 'counting upon it.'
It's registered now. It will continue to live --
this day of ours 'requited.'

It helps -- though often I have to do it
more than once -- always an odd number of times.

I like odd numbers -- always have.

Well -- it was a nice attempt -- but
still the Music makes me sigh.

What you suppose might happen here?

Look a butterfly!

The Music enthusing is like an old
half-developed photo whose subject we crave
to know -- theme which -- if known --
could make the glory-difference in the world.

The Music aches for a place in album
across defining time -- but even more -- aches
to tell of what it knows -- breathe alive.

Music.

That balloon in sky I recall within
a settled cast on all our times that reaches out
from lawns of home -- candy-red -- round
and wind-borne in amber -- faint rare substance
purposeful sublime -- from
the Music.

Stroller:

If you think something has changed
you're right: Moods -- levels -- evolve.

We'll go back to beaches -- but
here we turn to the green green lawns.

Look -- there's Grandma's car
parked over there. I don't think she'll mind
if we take it for a spin. I have
an extra key. Come on -- follow me -- hop in.

Look at this: green metal
and chrome all around us and no seat belts!

How marvelous it can be! Hear
the warm vinyl smell the engine's hefty roll.
I'll just pull back -- pull back
on the steering: Easy -- easy -- weeeeeee!

Town's a riveting sight -- we know -- from
above -- but note the upper panes
of our biggest store: ties
foundation garments hats and ladies gloves.
Ah -- the Renaissance tower:
I'd never have thought it so huge and high.

The boardwalk the beach the carpet
of ocean-blue hemming it -- look south to see
good old Wesley Grove and its
Auditorium's plumpish turret-hive crests.
Clouds -- kingdoms of them -- now
Main -- the tracks -- and the lawns of home
peeking through as we bank west.

Wait.

What the heck is that? Look --
look over your shoulder to Northern Lake.
In the clouds there -- it's going straight up:
It's another car if I'm not mistaken.

Odd.

Somebody else has the same idea. Or maybe
it's figment of my imagination.

I mean --

it happened by itself --
like that fellow in the bus station

who swings his tan valise.

No need for a crystal ball.

But now our house is down below -- we move
deeper into lawn-world.

If we can.

I mean -- I'm still a bit concerned
with that other flying car:
Sudden visions can be important to us
and I forgot my tape recorder.

Now -- relax -- relax.

I'd like you to hear my family album.
I had planned to come across it
through refraction in a musical haze.

Ah -- there's the haze.

See little me with summertime sprinkler
and mother young on the steps
in saddle shoes and from these views feel
days beyond the page.

We're on the other side of Main.

The Music

I first heard when young turned
Elsewhere near with the rarest -- tenderest --
coverings -- with unexplained tears --
yearnings -- soundless it would push me to hunt
Real Joy beyond the carousels and lawns
but never far from here.

See Mother's young brother --
Uncle -- on the porch strumming my guitar.
It's around the time we took a jaunt
to buy this brand new car.

Mother's sis -- my aunt -- walking lawn
in confirmation dress -- our
stout new Olds is parked in front and holds
basic vision picturesque: our
streets from down below -- grammar school
and old Town High.

Aunt's kids -- my cousins --
boy and younger girl in color of a sudden
-- all dressed up in Easter gear --
with gaily fashioned baskets -- grinning
posed above our hillocks
pinning face-tags toothy on the year.

Grandma smoking on the porch -- she peruses
The Tribune -- and Grandpop walking
up the steps -- he hums old tunes that bring
the days of tales from Town's
other side: funny names -- old pavilions too
-- these on antique postcards now.

And Father waiting in his car
to take me to the evening's joyous castles
-- introduction to another place --
another time -- to the Here-and-There's
ever-charming Near-and-Far.

Like the music:

I might strike a harmony. I play

the classical guitar -- have done so since
the first year of high school --
and -- you see -- I've discovered certain
chords -- Harmonies -- well --
the best thing to do is play one for you.

Listen:

There's a day out there to live -- a time
a place -- if I could --
could only. And here the world reforms
without a single change:
Out there from beyond It comes -- knowing
whispering -- calling
from within the sound -- restoring
It flies through me with the words it makes:
near and far -- Elsewhere --
and ever it seems that the Right and True
is about to become our air.

I need to run some images by you: There's
something in them -- a broad
breathing exuberance that will remain.

Taste a little:

In the shade of house and pines
glades of sunflecked times unfold for us
on bumpy beds of needles --
the whole of just one's standing there
scented with events unrolling
where more green grows half a yard away.
It could be almost anything:
an event a gathering of folks from here
some from a car trip there
and all around us girls in white cotton

boys gaming -- mother's
chatting arranging -- dads on porches
smoking long cigars.

The house is really worth exploring
and though our family place
it brings to life now other dwellings:
unfamiliar papered rooms
glimpsed through eyes of another's mind
-- a reader's vision refracted:
a bird-cage antique-chest framed-photos
folks who fit we know not where.

But of our own we do know
and feel perhaps more than we grasp
in words -- and so we cling
to a certain kind of silent sheen
brought forth by love
by the Music in all things
and try our best to show to others
what eyes we know have seen.

Life of the grounds the porch the house
events remembered half-forgotten
charged with you and me as we pass through
and leave our footprint to be found.

Could it be that it was
we who tailor-made it for ourselves -- said
this is what we want and who we are?

We're on our way.

Spring cleaning now
and the fresh alertness in the place
reborn through open windows
Then an early summer.

Around our house -- a sturdy white
corner colonial of five porch pillars -- lawn
hillock lawn to slate gray sidewalk --
trees around us even taller grew: thick pines
-- three of them -- with giant maple
weaving roof our extra house a bungalow
across the yard beneath it.

Here forsythia bushes tolled in yellow
the berry tree in berries
the watermelon freshness of new-cut grass
was far and wide with day.

Inside awakening near golden curtains
hearing -- cheek in pillow taking in: Chirps
tweets -- the heady sound of distant
mowers turn quiet -- warm intoxicating sweet.

A neighbor's clothesline pulley squeaks.

Here I am. Here I am.

Woodpecker pecks electric circles --
dry solid forest tones -- blue in sky above
silvery airplane lazy drones.

Life redolent of itself expansive -- warm
luscious roaming in an endless
future fragrant of days and circumstance.

Something happens here. It's like
the sudden recognition of certain faces
that have been around forever.

No -- it's broader -- a voluminousness
with a single harmonious volume.

No again: Two volumes -- a double-whispered
fragrance that spreads beyond
the present in the present -- or maybe
loses the present in the split.

Hold on.

Yet Here-And-Now's never been so real
-- so very -- well -- present
as it is -- reaching drinking -- vast
glowing -- glowing. Here
Something's about to happen -- today
it's going to happen -- no?

Just hold on.

As on Sunday -- all things deepen
settle stately down in town
on picket fences -- flowers calling
church-chimes sounding fancies
rhyming in the season's love throughout
the whole of our old house.
Out I step -- take bike-ride beachward
east on our avenue over tracks
down Main to Lane --
make a right on the pharmacy block
to Southern Lake Drive --
up beside the Moorish Castle stop.

Let me see now:

Ferris wheel sharpening up
lake pedal-boat-dotted
and the spangling 1890s tunes
of carousels.

Fade it out
and breathe into my Chords.

Here
the glowing mind with something far
near and fair
makes second sunrise

ends back beside the morning lake.

Happen once more do.

Day out there
day and secret incident.

What was that?

I thought I saw great houses saw --

But go-round sounds return.
Palaces forgotten -- gone astray
in scant Sunday traffic
I make my way to Northern Lake
eight short blocks up
pass beachfront folks -- boardwalk
rides -- the pools arcades.

I shall have to think again.

North Lake Drive -- view wider than the South
-- a Swiss panorama -- open bridges cars
pint-sized mansions charming on the precious
father side. Now I stop my pedaling
to pump the possibilities that suddenly arise

Where is it?

This for a while in morning warmth
then back across North Main ever tracing lake.
Then to High School -- shady blocks south
-- I swing home craving corner --
go upstairs to shoulder a closet-door a wall.
Here a window-pine before me
sun flecks and fat venetian blinds -- I nibble

on that quid that's come with life
that mirrored drift all mine -- vaguely hear
downstairs conversations.

Now what I may have had so near --
in morning spring or summer bed -- arrives
once more -- right here -- in magic
sleepless corner that's shaded with later --
with fugitive connections glittering
that I in galaxies of somewhere time divine.

What are You?

A day an age a life -- a place of opalescent
dwellings -- clocks that Sunday chimes
forever above the green the blue of space -- the
tock of mallets gaming too -- birds bees
You -- in an age remembered -- full and grand
and surely placed.

Downstairs talking.

Far away.

Certain

I must pursue this taste
in time for real or just on paper --
I inquire if the Chords could ever sing enough
bells of churches ring to our senses
the secret that they bring.

How much of life will have to pass
before I cup that lovely face?

Yes.

I believe it started on
those spring and summer mornings --
the doubling -- or
redoubling -- as I've come to call it:
Grandma and Grandpop out
doing their errands -- Mother at work --
Uncle in New York City.
The house was empty except for me and
that warm and efflorescing
promise that I rolled around the breath
between and just behind my eyes.

That gorgeous calling.

The Music happened too around this time.

Listen to a little more:

Half a day warm trembling
confident strong the edge of love's glory
here the last day of school.

A life a giant time reborn to me
I who am alive to feel
summer world's full-flavored embrace
in near and far perfection
past tall windows' blind-striped panes.
Teachers play games
fulfilling hours -- clock plays slow
but slow not like before --
it toys with smiles everyone can take.

Hand almost at twelve -- it
reaches twelve --
all aware that in a minute --

And here it is -- the bell!

Entryway out on sidewalks groups
call and jostle as I
face-to-face walk by myself
with tearful joy I watch awaiting.
What objects I shall meet
in the free age of days and days?

What do you suppose might happen here?

A block away at home
new breathable joy of loved-ones
their bodies lighter
spring-like -- a curious thing.

After a rapid lunch
my Music-life alive I carry forth
to porch with Chords --
the out-there sense that begs itself
in sweet and sorrowful
whisperings of another life beyond --
to test them on the afternoon
and spread to this fine day reclaimed
the stuff Elsewhere is made on.

Chords -- yearning
aching incompleteness -- their yarn
outside my craving reach
but how far off not a soul can know.

Tick-tock -- two chords -- the first
my own -- the other a mere major
that settles the glorious slaughter-joy
by closing the far-off rapture
that will tick-return recharged and full
a delirious second later.

Tick-tock-tick -- an on-off ostinato
built into the nature of things -- essential
breathing form of all that is.

Tock.

'One two three four five six seven
eight nine ten eleven.'

Got that everybody?

Chords over -- and though
the change around me nearly goes
my summer lies ahead
in slightly sweeter stillness now
with after-sound remains.

I pose to strike again.

But into present times I stay
as uncle comes to rescue pulling up
with a honk and a hey!

Places we will go to -- pastimes
in the far-off warmth --
roads and lanes --
happenings in our timeless time.

'Hey you're a free man!'

'Yeah!'

And in a minute we're inhaling
ocean air -- navigating coast on golden streets
all ours with cares unburdened passing

mansions big hotels -- on our way to everywhere.

Hold on.

The screech of tires.

Oh -- did you hit your head?

The car's shocks aren't the best.

Ugh -- the burning rubber
of big whitewalls.

We've landed here beside
the Grammar School a block from home.
Look -- a few kids linger.

Let's observe.

As it was with Heather -- they look
like miniature adults to me -- movie actors:
Walter Kozic with his striped
polo shirt resembles Kirk Douglas in
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea -- and
Frankie Mazzo looks like Farley Granger
-- and I could swear that stout
John Milner -- always in jacket and tie --
is Greenstreet in the flesh.

These are good kids.

The bad kids always look like guys
in a prison movie and
seem to be from some other school --
an Alcatraz that
can't be far away but which exists
in another world.

You see them hanging all around.
They range from the benign roughnecks --
like the William-Bendix kid --
to the truly scary -- the Richard-Widmark
sneer-faced psychopath.

John Garfield over there ends up being
a nice guy: You figure he got
a tough break somewhere along the line.

Except for the rare Widmark
most of the criminal-types seem afraid of me
or -- at least -- puzzled by me.
Most of the teachers seem equally confused:
Not often have they seen a good kid
who dresses well and lives in a nice house
get truly rotten marks on tests.
When my parents got divorced my school skills
vanished. Ha! -- my knowledge
of multiplication is still about third grade.
I can add and subtract -- even
divide a little -- but I can't much multiply.
It sounds crazy -- but deep inside
I'm delighted I did awfully in my schoolwork:
Skipping the horrid times-tables
freed me up to read
Bertrand Russell's Principia Mathematica
-- which -- to my excited
surprise -- didn't depend on having to know
the arithmetic-junk of school.

I was a vacuum for this stuff.

Interesting -- yes -- but I'd like you to
keep quiet about my oddities --
keep them a secret -- especially from kids.
It's a pet peeve I have about mass distribution.
I won't go on about it now. Just tell
this to a few of Unc's Hollywood chums: Sometimes
normal kids can pursue fine things.

Even kids who go to church.

Uh oh -- there goes Lakita the Colored Cop
running after John Garfield. That's
too bad -- because I'm sure he was the only
'criminal' misfit who trusted me.
He actually protected me once from a Widmark.
I guess he's going to jail.

But what am I saying? These are sixth-graders!

Let's head down the block toward home.
I'll park right in front.

Look:

lawn hillock lawn
to terrific slate-gray sidewalk.
Pity that kids have to -- I mean it's a pity
that kids someday will have to chalk
on bright and rough concrete.

Look -- at the top of the little hill --
parked there and resembling
a piece of modern conceptual sculpture:
a healthy refrigerator box.

And crawling out from a port in the side
is Cousin himself -- Cousin Nick.

He's my all-purpose navigator: I've sent him
to the moon and Mars and also
to several locations in the past and future.

The kid's been around.

We get the boxes from behind Mrs. Goldfarb's
appliance store on Main -- and
like pallbearers convey them processionally
all the way here.

Now a refrigerator box has
some marvelous uses: You can add a seat belt
and tumble end-over-end

down the hill -- or you can build a spaceship
-- or you can build a time machine.
I'm partial to the last arrangement -- but
my absolute favorite use
for such a box is one to which I cannot
adequately give a name.
Not adequately -- I must repeat -- though
-- as you know -- I've found a word:

ELSEWHERE.

Now that Nick's been called away for lunch
I'd like you to examine the box.
Come on -- let's go -- follow me up the lawn.
Let's crawl inside the cut-out port
and bend it shut behind us. There -- it's
a tight -- squeeze -- in here for -- two.
Ah -- look. While this model's
not what I would call a tumbling box -- it's
certainly a plating box.
Plating rhymes with mating and it's
Cousin Nick's word for something that I do:
contemplate. 'Are you
plating again?' he asks me when he sees me
standing alone apparently transfixed.
A plating box is precisely
the right thinness for absorption of light.
See the biscuit-colored glow?
Sit down on the grassy floor and look up.
Count silently:
One two three four five six seven
eight nine ten eleven.
Got it.
Look how the light bleeds louder where
the folds edge together on top.
Count on that too.

Now it's not something I can come right out
and tell you about -- though
I've already dealt with it a little -- very
little in a whole lot of words --
and it's still quite broad in its effects.

I mean:

There's day out there.

That's thing you'll be a master at
if you follow me along.

To Elsewhere.

Years from now I'll find a poem by Leopardi.

L'infinito it's called --

The infinite. In this poem the poet tells
how he would sit behind a shrub
on a hilltop and imagine interminable
spaces and superhuman
silences beyond it -- ove per poco

il cuor non si spaura --

'where for a while the heart is unafraid.'

My box has little to do
with fear -- rather it's a kind of crucible
or retort or still in which unknown
things -- lovely-clear and yet unclarified --
filter through -- gather and merge
as in music -- in the Chords --
and -- I'm sure -- behind the poet's shrub.

It's out there -- you see -- it's
near and far.

It gives and yet holds back --
ravishes me with sweet promises of World
and days and days and days.

What a town.

Now puffy textures -- softer than
the movement of my eyes -- seem to be doing
gymnastics: One image takes to
the parallel bars -- one jumps and tumbles
-- within our cardboard walls.

It's a circus of sorts: There seems to be
life on this planet. Oh -- that guy
at the station -- I think -- yes -- he swings
his valise -- he's at it again -- he's
swinging -- not tumbling -- and --
wow! -- that other flying car is here -- I
saw it -- felt it soar I think --
and then -- several other people -- whose
speech-shapes -- elegant talk --
are forms I feel at the back of my tongue.

'Hello dear lad -- greetings!'

These are sophisticated people -- they have
a precision about them which makes
order -- challenges disorder -- or tries to.

'My dear lad -- why
ever are you in that ghastly box?'

They're from old movies -- I think --
and from the light romances
of writers who sigh on dusty shelves:
Jeffery Farnol -- Elinor Wyle.
I'm a fan of Margaret Widdemer myself.

Oh -- look at that:
A wonderful place -- thought I saw --
for an instant -- a truly marvelous mountain
of houses -- mansions they were.

Now nothing but lighted cardboard.

Things are happening though -- World will
surely blossom -- by and by.

Look at there: a butterfly!

Now as Cousin Nick can tell you --
'plating' boxes are pretty much the same
as space-ship boxes -- pretty much --
except that they lack dials and switches.

I just happen -- yes! -- happen
to have a few colored pens in my pocket.

Stop laughing Nick.

There now -- here we've got
an accelerator switch -- a crescent shape
with a stick-shift sticking out.

Pull it up. I know it's
already up -- but -- you know -- do it.

Ah yes -- slowly -- slowly.

Odd: I felt a trembling
but the grass is still beneath us.
Let me crawl out for second.

'Ah -- I see.'

Move over -- I'm coming back in.'

A small miscalculation:
That was a time-machine switch I made.
A space-ship switch is
a horizontal bar with two thin verticals
at right angles beneath it.
Here we are. We'll also need a lever
to close the bottom flaps.
Natch. I knew something was wrong.

We're off.

Sorry -- if I look -- a little --
I mean -- our house --
the whole neighborhood -- the giant
backyard maple -- it --

Oh well.

As you can tell by the hollow feeling
in your stomach -- these boxes
really move. I forgot to saw a porthole
but -- judging by the coolness
of the atmosphere -- I think we have arrived
back at the beachfront. There's
more to treat before we go our separate ways
-- and we need to be near the boards.

Set her down -- gently. Good.

Open flaps.

Ah yes -- boards beneath us.

I'll exit first.

'Hold everything! Lemme back in.

Quick!'

I forgot to pull
the time-machine switch back down.

I coulda got --

There now. I knew it was
a bit too quiet. Here we are: carousel
music -- the hubbub --
the patter of strolling feet a thousand
on the boards beneath us.

Let's go out into the beachlight.

Yes -- the coconutty smell of sun-creams
jelly apple -- the sweetness
of the cotton candy -- all ocean-salted.

Ah -- the warm scent of the boards.

I just got a flash: It was -- I think
it was Catherine the Great's
Palace in Saint Petersburg: all that
ornamental white and gold
against a background cerulean blue.

But here we are by South Pavilion -- right
between it and the red brick
First Avenue Arcade with its striped awnings.
An array of colorful canvases
border our boardwalk -- decorate it -- match
the festival of beach umbrellas.

Now there's something about the shady
rectangles the awnings make outside the shops:
I've seen 'it' all before -- but not
here only -- I mean it's a kind of drawn-out
flash -- mild but with deeper hits --
that intensifies the feeling
and that brings for less than a second
a sense of -- well -- something
not here -- but here -- well -- near and far.

Ever more throughout my life
a glorious sense of having 'seen it before'
will seize me in fine flashes
charged with an electric jolt of Big Reality.

Little things -- like awnings --
big things -- like a season -- will deliver

**this version of Elsewhere-taste
sometimes broad and heady -- like Glow -- or
 flashed -- a whisking joy-shock.**

**The present Chord -- summertime -- is vast.
 The Glow -- enthusiastic -- reaches.**

Why -- something just might happen here.

Breathe it in.

**We're in a good breathing spot. We see
 between and a block beyond
South Pavilion and First Avenue Arcade
 Southern Lake to our left
the Amusement Palace directly before us
 its Ferris wheel revolving.**

**Right over there -- in the little store
 beside the South Pavilion's
carousel crown -- you can buy seashells.**

**I recall that Uncle and I bought
lots of them: little bags of tiny tiny ones
 of diverse colors and not much bigger
than a pinhead -- conches -- too -- in which
 you can hear the ocean even at home
and -- I recall -- even glimpse the waves.**

**I see my profile: I stare at
a palmfull of sea-green shells -- my jagged
 cheek-nose fronts my viewing ghost.
From my fingers to across my mouth and past
 my eye -- a palm tree sprouts -- and
 in the distance lies the sea.**

**The palm is from a tropical paradise but
 the ocean's blue is ours -- just**

blocks east from the living room I'm in.

A hand-held movie-sense is here:

Ocean though single in sight is doubled

in spirit: It's the Ocean

seen in a movie at the North Pavilion.

I mistakenly thought the screen

faced the waves -- so any sea in any movie

was the present ocean -- just

a couple of hundred feet behind the show.

Our ocean -- here and there.

It took me -- it will take me -- years

to uncover this myopic persistence

and add it to my child's handful of shells.

Let's take a stroll.

So -- it was outside the shell shop

that Uncle -- in brief conversation with me

about our future in the arts --

first said 'rattle 'em good' -- which meant

-- I always presumed -- to leave

the audience stunned by one's performance.

'Kick ass' meant the same --

and -- I recall -- by the time we walked

over to the North Pavilion --

a fresh-headed world involving the two of us

breezed alive within my mind:

There we were -- living together in a big

Beverly Hills house -- Uncle

a director whose themes declared something

essential -- I couldn't say

what exactly -- but they had to do with us

and they 'rattled 'em good.'

I -- naturally -- was the world's greatest

concert guitarist -- indeed a player

of such accomplishment that audiences were

driven insane by my performance.

People even passed away.

A troop of special doctors had to be placed
outside Carnegie Hall
to counsel and perhaps remove the patrons
to local hospitals after exposure
to my concert -- so affecting were my tones.

I had the vague feeling that
my Chords -- or something like them --
played a mysterious role in altering the minds
of those who came to hear them.

I would sometimes imagine so affected a brain:

The patron lost in a watercolor world
of dreams -- meadows and tulips and mountains
-- the guy wandering disoriented
saying 'Where am I? Who am I? What happened?'

Well -- I rattled you good.

But -- look -- what a day we have today!

All these people -- the voices
the rush of sea the distant carnival music
and the cooling ocean air.

Stop right here.

I'd like you to try something: Remember
the Moorish Castle's ceiling-sky
the funhouse and the Ferris wheel. Recall
the Pool and our little lakes.
Think of Lane -- Church Street and Main.

Do it.

Breathe the day.

Look at the salt water taffy shop
right here -- at the boards and the beach.
Settle down a moment.

Good.

I cannot say if anything has come to you -- but
I -- for me -- caught a flash of school --
of Main Street too in the nearby town of Maplehurst
-- I think I saw the drugstore there --
and of Mother and me driving across Northern Lake
on a certain day -- I don't know when.

Maybe you too got a flash of world-chips --
an easy lesson-jolt in first stage
Elsewhere -- a speck-shock of big reality.

You may have even received a hit
from a completely different location -- say
Miami Beach or Brighton England
or even Istanbul if you've ever been there.

Or even if you haven't.

Fast you've got to look back at yourself.

Of course -- there's the chance that
something did come to you and you missed it.

Lots of folks don't catch the bits
as they flash by at really enormous speeds.

In fact -- I'd venture to say that
most people don't even know they're there.

The bits -- the flashes -- hit me
between the eyes on the bridge of the nose.

They tingle at my fingertips.

I breathe them into my chest and head
and try to extend their visit.

Sometimes I wish I could take both my hands
and scoop out a home -- ha! -- I meant

a hole -- in the air in front of my face --
an opening I could stretch large
and then crawl into -- my step a passage
to the actual echoed region.

It would satisfy the fingertips
to scoop and stretch.

Anyway:

Here we find ourselves just outside
the grand North Pavilion.
You've seen it already: It's a Venetian
palace of a place that comprises
a movie castle a wide arcade and hall.
We've been on its promenade.
The arcade is like the South Pavilion's
only bigger -- but the sound
the light and the salted smell of time
are pretty much the same.

Let's go inside.

Now I'd like you to listen
beyond the reverberating voice-scrap
and the shuffling of strollers.
Lend an ear: Someone's singing. It comes
from the other side of the grand hall's
big copper doors: a man singing solo. Do you
hear it? He leaped a full octave.
Now he's doing a trill on the high note.
And now -- believe it or don't -- he's -- he's
pecking out little staccato tones
above what we thought was his highest pitch.
He's holding one way up there -- he's
holding -- holding -- and

here splashes the band's closing chord.

At this point I know
that the bassman follows with a hefty
bow -- wow -- wow after which the performers
freeze in a middle-range woooooooo.

The lead singer is Gerard Deodato.
He was one of Uncle's closest teenage buddies
and is -- will be -- my special friend.
I must reveal at this point that my own taste
for popular music ends in the 1940s --
though that's the decade before I was born.

I enjoy Gerard -- however -- because
nobody's got a voice like his: To hear it is
to touch a tradition known up and down
our shores -- a special 'fifties sound of home.

Gerard has two voices actually:
a tenor to rival Mario Lanza's -- and something
else -- a kind of -- well -- soprano
which in various circumstances can range from
the razor sharpness of an opera diva
to the slippery passion of a black female jazz
or gospel singer. I kid you not.

Gerard 'rattles 'em good' at clubs and churches
and at bar and bat mitzvahs. The wealthy
Syrian community in the nearby town of Dale Beach
adores him -- and people there have said
'If he was one of us he'd be a multi-millionaire.'

Gerard will almost 'rattle 'em good'
at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.
This story needs an introduction:
Opera is his greatest passion -- he loves it
even more -- I think -- than he hates
injustice -- even if he applies to both concerns

equal parts of cape-and-quill romanticism.

But more than opera -- what rattles
him above all else -- in a tormenting way --
is the pain of hapless people.

The following tale suggests one way
he encounters those in need:

A person high up in the world of opera will
discover Gerard -- introduce him
and his lovely wife Eileen into the circle
of glamorous aficionados.

Gerard will have an important appointment
with this impresario -- but
on route to the man's house in Connecticut
-- where the meeting will be held --
he will witness a terrible motor accident.

He will pull several people from
a flaming car and be slightly injured himself.

From a highway phone booth -- and
full of apology -- he reschedules his meeting.

A week later the 'anonymous motorist'
sets out again for his patron's domain. Not
fifteen minutes into his journey
he sees a poor elderly woman in a wheelchair
stuck on the railroad tracks -- hears
a train horn frantic in the distance. He rescues
the woman -- but as he does so his car
rolls down a short incline and onto the tracks.

Half of his old Chevy stays put --
the other half winds up in the adjacent town.

More than three weeks later -- in
a borrowed car -- he at long last makes it
to his re-rescheduled appointment.

It's an exquisite day -- and Gerard's eyes
are enthralled by the refinements around him.

Relaxed -- he even stops worrying
about the grease on his shirt -- which he got

when the car he borrowed broke down.
As he and other guests by the pool are poured
champagne on the spacious granite deck --
the impresario lifts his glass to make a toast
to Gerard's new career -- when a golf ball
from a neighboring course
hits the roof of his tall Tudor house.
The ball skips down the steep
tiled slope -- bounces up -- dives to earth
striking the impresario's bald head.
The man stumbles forward
cracks his skull against a barbecue pit
and dies on the spot --
broken champagne glass still in his hand.

It may be that Gerard has a sort of
contract with God -- an agreement that he
didn't actually agree to -- but which
he must honor so long as his
inspiration comes from Sidney Carton
in A Tale of Two Cities.

You know -- it dawned on me
that we left Grandmother's car in front
of the house. Poor thing -- I'm
sure she's searching all over Lane Avenue:
'Madonna mia -- they stole my car!'
Listen: While I return our trusty auto
and get back our fridge-box --
which still sits near the South Pavilion
-- I'd like you to walk over to
the largest islet of Little Middle Lake.
Let's step out of the arcade.
Look: Right across Ocean Street -- in front
of the North Pavilion here --
is Little Flower Park -- where stands

the statue of Founder Bradfield.
Just beyond the park is a block of grass
and the east side of the lake.
Then there's the bridge. See it there?
Note directly beyond the bridge
the thick wooded background. That's where
the cupcake islets grow their trees.
You can walk onto only one --
the Saint George it's called. It's below
the far side of the bridge
and is reached by old stone steps.
I'd like you to go there
as I have some final matters -- worlds
of ultimate importance --
to communicate to you -- and I think
it's a good spot for it.

I feel it coming on.

Good -- you made it. Let's sit
under this tree on that bench there.
I'm so grateful you're here --
really I am -- but don't be offended if
I 'count upon' the scene anyway.
I mean -- the whole world's got to see
this wooded little pond --
the school of swans floating by
and the elegant houses that border it.
'One two three four five six seven
eight nine ten eleven.'
I always want to say and then eleven
so the rhythm would be nicely
rounded -- but the and then would make
thirteen words in all.
That just wouldn't do -- wouldn't do.

At any rate:

The day is summer-quiet here --
sultry one weighted magic in the darkish green.
It brings what peace of soul can bring
in the life of spectral things.

Mind-arrivals that beg transcription.

I haven't talked at all about -- well -- about
transcription -- you know -- writing.
At times the most important points are slipped
because they are so present: We tend
to give short shrift to what's under our noses.
This is as it should be -- on occasion --
but breathing must be for us a matter of science
and art -- a doubling or redoubling.

Art is -- in fact -- the problem --
as well as an attempt
at solution -- has always been --
in the great taste of time -- the ticking
lack you've heard in Chords of mine --
if they made you yearn at all:
That snack in the flash
that placed can never be upon the tongue
or dissolved in yearning souls
begs day for fare that will not come.

Summer-life here skyward spreading --
promises World about to dawn -- all by itself
or in glinting chips of long-lost days
that refuse the orphan's nowhere haze -- blends
the doctor's office in a turreted house
a visit to a shell shop way back when warm library
and church were lightened by electric fans.

I've burned to take it.

Smell the toasted books -- wicks and wax
-- the circumstance that will not yield in
water and trees and in old houses around this
magic pond we call Little Middle Lake.

Where is it?

It calls for me to cross -- to dive
into it -- come alive in its joyful tears or
at least in the speech it cries for.

You see -- though I feel I can at times walk
right into day's calling before me
something will not happen here all by itself.

Let me lie on the grass -- on my side --
fist to cheek -- a weed between my teeth -- pencil
tap-tapping on my head -- with notebook open:

Bus Station -- longish plaster-white --
the waiting room sleepy western lonesome capsule's
olden light by Southern Lake diffused --
antique tiled windowed room -- gilded ticket-bar
and a whistling janitor pushing broom.
This scene is what he drank in -- standing there --
light-suited dream -- swinging tan valise.

Let me tap a little more:

People -- chatty ones on great green lawns
in scenes above the ocean -- must be
in a world released from old redoubling mind.
'My dear dear Lad -- might I ask what

are you doing in the grass tapping your head?'

I don't know who they are -- but I like
their precision -- a certain elevation in manner
akin to fine crystal -- a well-pressed
pinstriped sportiveness airy with a day of days.

Everybody's there -- Mother too -- the whole
family -- I caught a flicker-flash.

Let me try again.

Bus Station -- longish plaster-white --
the waiting room sleepy western lonesome capsule's
olden light by Southern Lake diffused --
antique tiled windowed room -- gilded ticket-bar
and a whistling janitor pushing broom.
This scene is what he drank in -- standing there --
light-suited dream -- swinging tan valise.

Yes -- everybody's there -- I do believe -- Town
flourishes -- the Moorish Castle's
life beats -- carousels twirl -- bathers splash
and we repair -- I think -- north
to low bluffs -- I'm right -- to the lawns above
the sparkling ocean -- which must be
Dale Beach -- yes -- for here we cross the bridge
-- the central bridge -- of Northern Lake.

I'm sidetracked -- for I know I must process
Northern Lake -- our other border --
and the towns around it.

Autumn too.

I've already detailed Southern Lake.
Perhaps you'll like the big one even more.

I beg your indulgence:

Town's northern boundary as you know is Northern Lake
-- carves out you've heard peninsular places --
hamlets boroughs winding wooded way -- like all else here
-- the ground -- its structures -- consecrated.

It's Eastern tip is at Ocean Street -- above the beach.

Its main basin -- twice bridged banked
and not much wider than a branch of it -- reaches rails
is flanked north-side by Ocean Crown.

This village -- two roads wide -- is pearled
with baby mansions -- these on lake's fine curving side
the greater ones at ocean's edge.

Turning moving west to rails by Main -- left to right
our sky-borne stare beyond -- we now see
four close branch-cleaved keys. The leftmost of these
is Town -- which as you've heard travels down
past tracks to the tidy lawns of home.

High School stadium -- sports-field at water's edge --
here to make a forum of stately classic facts.

Our next key's back a notch makes First Branch split:

Wanalasset -- back of whose peninsular part
a hamlet's little Main Street hides
moated by the frayed-off streams of lake -- canoe routes
seaward-flowing in the placid Indian days.

Then Tralacqua -- which means between the water -- it's
an arboreal medallion four blocks long

seven wide with great old homes -- enter at the tracks
through pillars of old stone -- right where

First Branch makes the Third. The latter branch curves
around Tralacqua's North -- divides it

but for Stubby Rustic Bridge -- from Maplehurst Heights
with its country verve -- but not before making

Branch Number Four sever the Heights
from Maplehurst Burgh.

This antique town -- all dapper with

plump and turreted homes and porches that wrap --
unfolds from the Fourth five blocks to sea
and side by side with Ocean Crown. Back near Branch
the Burgh's Main Street -- shared with Town
and thin O.C.-- is prim with bank barber pharmacy.
Here a tiny old park with station and gazebo
-- this a flower at water's rim --
and a bridge to Maplehurst Heights -- whole place
watched by a blue water tower.

The Northern Border of Maplehurst Burgh
is Dale -- Dale Beach -- where grandest manors gaze
from lawns and groves and golden roads to
ocean's bluff -- a land of columns with aging tales.

Remember when atop the brick facade of Pool
some time ago we looked beyond to a world of mansions
on green lawns? Well Dale Beach is what we saw
beyond the lake -- other zones too -- Northern Lake
true center of the world -- we at boardwalk
shell-shop panes or strolling down old Lane Avenue.

Thread a needle -- comb your hair --
in these routines all else is not forgotten:
Your range of world is cloaked
transparent -- silent -- in being -- ever there.

You see what it's like? Do you
see what I mean? This is what I go through.
The place -- and the day too --
and all the days.

My Music -- the Chords -- press
the most. Then there are the sunsets --
the silences -- the fragrant
honeysuckle -- the first touch of autumn
gentling the heat.

I have to tame these places -- join them.

Autumn and the other seasons too.

Autumn.

Gentling the heat.

Yes -- something is changing. Sense it
do you? We feel it every year.
Let's return in mind to our front lawn --
leave box on the island -- here.

OCEAN BOOMS

Summer's wave forms orange point intense
close quiet back-bagged with memory's
oceanside castles -- whirling trips up to the sky
shot with stillness speaking what's ahead
and always with us.

Through front lawn pines the sun
drops so deeply red you can stare right at it
see it faint beyond the lines of town
over lands opaquely dreamt of in far upon a times
feel how the past in is the future.

Soon familiar chill will slash us -- drop us
like the sun -- a thousand facts to be forgotten
leaving us one that grows and grows like
music moving to a place we think
we've known forever.

Presently we sleep -- souls to hibernate inside.

Eyes close -- open. Another day begins.

Lie there. Feel and think.

Now -- of a sudden -- sense of time
reversing -- blooms and flowers thought behind us
curtain breezes spreading sun --
so that our boardwalk's in the pines and somehow
on our pillows warm and snowy.

Back -- back we drift all sure in knowing
South Pavilion will keep cheering out-of-towners
with more days here -- to roll dream over
dreaming -- try to round the shape of time -- with
bliss of soul that counts on sleep --
a spreading search for endless worlds to keep.

Sorry -- false alarm.
I could have sworn Autumn was ready.
Or that I was ready for it.
That's how it often is with seasons.

Moods -- you know.

Anyway -- I just saw Jukie
drive by -- pulling his lemon-ice wagon.
And look there: a Monarch butterfly!
I keep having to remind myself
that people -- though not my specialty --
are -- from at least a normative
point of view -- the general life-blood
of any given place.

We'll need a dose of 'normative.'

Let's sit on a bench.

Jukie's one of Nubbie's and Frattie's
brothers and is the greatest
storyteller among the people that we know.
You really must hear him tell his
wild tales himself: He drops his hs -- turns
his hard cs into gs -- his ts
into ds and has an imploring animated style:
'Dell me if ahm wrong -- in dat
badeing zoot she looked like aff a gow'

I remember him saying once.
Some years from now -- he will be have
a close call on the Ferris Wheel:
'Dare I wuz -- wid doo o' my liddle nieces
-- lissen -- goin round 'n' round --
wait a minute -- and all-uh-va-zudden I zee
dis blue zlime -- blue zlime gumin'
down vrom da zky -- shut up -- I zee dis
blue-green grap vallin'
down owda da zky -- zo 'elp me --
zo right away I figga -- dis 'as gotta be dat
acid rain -- gotta be -- right? --
you know like you zee on da news acid rain?
Zo ahm kickin' da acid rain
off da floor uh da Ferris Wheel and dellin
my liddle nieces -- ztay unda
da awnin' girls! -- 'ey -- 'ey ztop dis ding!
I yell at da guy oo's runnin' it.
God vorbid da acid rain eats troo da medal
-- we're all dead -- right?
Well I dunno what da grap wuz afda-all.'

Dat's 'normadiv.'

Here's another story Jukie tells --
a tale everyone in Town has heard. It involves
a fisherwoman called Aunt Betsy.
She was a friend of my grandparents -- and
though I vaguely recall her having
existed -- her lore is repeated often enough
for me to give this account.
Aunt Betsy was a thin prim woman -- very
wealthy it was rumored -- 'as rich
as a Havenhurst' -- my grandmother used to say
-- referring to a wealthy family
who lives in Dale Beach -- though Aunt Betsy

was probably no where near that rich.
She pursued fishing in memory of her husband
-- Peter -- who owned a large marina.
Clearly religious -- the gentle lady always had
a Saint Peter statuette taped somewhere
on her inexpensive rod and reel.
Most stories about Aunt Betsy's are of things
that people did to her: the night her
young cousins nailed her slippers to the floor
-- the time the Chief of Police --
Joe Haley -- who used to call the numbers
at the church bingo games -- gave her
sticky bingo cards as a prank -- so that she
couldn't peel her markers off.
Only once did she complain after being 'duped'
-- and that was when a shifty politician --
Jack 'Beard' Rhett -- who was running for mayor
and was aware that Aunt Betsy detested him
-- put his bumper-sticker on her car.
Aunt Betsy despised all politicians -- especially
ones with beards -- and even more so
those with shady pasts -- so when she discovered
the ad on her car she was hot for a week:
'He doesn't believe in property'
Aunt Betsy was heard to say -- a statement
tantamount to calling Mr. Rhett
a communist and -- by extension -- in her
familiar estimate -- a sex-maniac.
She nearly had forgotten the incident -- when
one day out to sea on a fishing boat with
young Jukie -- and with Fredo the Blond Fireman
-- who -- by the way -- used to play Columbus
every year in our celebration -- she reeled in
a poster of Jack Rhett's bearded face.
She was about to fling the item
'back to the other sharks' when Jukie snatched it.

He cut out Rhett's face and taped it
to the head of a fluke -- what we call a summer
flounder. That evening -- when the party
reached shore -- Jukie took the photo-faced fish
and hid it under a folding chair
in the armory auditorium -- where the hopeful
was to speak in four days time.
The stench caused the initial controversy --
making it impossible for people
to enter the room -- but the real excitement
came when the source of the smell
was uncovered -- and dutifully photographed
by Sammy Bones -- Jukie's uncle --
who free-lanced for Sand Bar Magazine --
our local society publication:
DOES A RHETT-FISH ROT FROM THE HEAD DOWN?
was the headline above the photo
on the popular 'Picture of the Week' page.

It's odd coming from a person who
shuns people as a rule --
but I often wonder how many Aunt Betsys
Jukies and others like them -- or
just as characteristic -- exist in towns
across America -- people who
never will be known outside the circle
of their own home world --
those even from my own plot of earth
whom I will never hear about.
The impossibility of knowing all of them
makes me moody -- of not knowing
every Lane Avenue and each story it holds.

Something's wrong in this
emptiness -- failure in our powers -- this
love that never has a chance.

Sometimes I feel that -- yes -- I do know
everyone -- or did. Actually there are moments
I feel I've left a hundred homelands --
families too -- each that I need to recollect.

I have an image of a boy in some small town
-- a little guy who is not myself -- not
exactly -- for he is rooted in his world -- is
a character unredoubled true -- his
yellow school bus a part of him -- his silos
not like those glimpsed inland here.

His skies are hard and blue -- his school
long and flat in rural fields.

When at last I learn to drive I'll
search for a kindred place: Might it not hold
the life that I once lived -- maybe
on a farm or on the island by the lighthouse
where people raked up steamer-clams?

On the other hand -- too close
an engagement with the extremely foreign
can strip my soul to vertigo:
A certain bright whiteness of walls -- not
the weathered white of olden stucco
that coats a few of our beach hotels -- but
the fright-white of new concrete
of factory lots or modern apartments foreign
and sun-blasted blinding at noon --
takes me far -- too far -- away -- threatens
in its otherness-shock of self
an erasure of self -- a bleaching of home.

It's a Chordless Elsewhere -- a stark kind

badly near and far -- yet which
is a place I know -- a whole other life.

Then we have the middle-zone type --
in which several of the weaker Chords remain.
It may come through the lean geometry
of high-tech office rooms or halls after hours
or on a lonely wharf on grayish days.
Disturbing -- yes -- but a gently transporting
hint of mild undoubling survives it --
a whiff of the Real that can still intrigue.

Again -- I seem to have lived there.

Naturally the effect is far from what occurs
in late-day luminance -- in which
True Life -- imploring -- is pledged -- wherein
trunk-shades lengthened and divided are
by spills of golden sun-wine -- light in which
the quiet plays a million miles wide
and the wraith of every summer flower ventures
violet in gentle aerial excursions.

Now there's a place to live.

Sometimes I wonder if late-day light
was with us all along -- in
the morning noon and evening -- when
we rode a carousel or exited
a castle -- all along -- absorbed yet
unseen -- behind our backs --
far-offing the world as we knew it.

Oh well.

Life or death?

In miniature it happens again:
Aunt Betsy now looks up from her fishing
and with a prim little shutter
scans the sky -- Jukie sirs his coffee
at the Bus Station Luncheonette
and glances out the window -- others gaze
mute as they fold towels at
the pool or tread homeward trailing shadows
from a day on cooler sand.

And somewhere a man still swings
his tan valise.

No false alarms this time:

So away from giant days of blues and golds
time at last does turn for real
with far-off spells
sounding now like distant peals.

It takes a certain day to tell -- one moment even:
reaper sweeps -- abandonment chills
damp and dark return to rooms -- gloom of night-days
hell of school.

Remember how that over-heated press
of classroom strangeness installed again a dying heart
under icy rain or how the weight of parlor lamps
voided thirst for Elsewhere's lane.

Creaturized I tremble downed
before a looming finger -- grand church-organ sky --
doubt-pounded -- a soft contraption --
bug with awe-stunned eyes -- in chilling sun-melt
swallowed drowned.

With time this slow attempted kill -- the funeral
frown of it transformed relieving -- forces
souls to settle musing -- thrilling -- French horn

calling the new life that's in store --
informing hearts that Ever-Was is somehow Evermore.
Shambling through the leaves now -- mind
brighter -- taken off the black wrought-iron spears
-- I find peace of pretty sepulchers -- marble
ivy -- anointed with a trancing ray through trees
of passing hues -- in day's tossed-out
southwestern sky.
Grace after all has found its way.

Yes -- I know.
It's all so very different now.

And here is where I leave you --
leave you on the bench -- as I crawl into
magic fridge-box. I ask you only
to keep your eyes wide open -- to mirror me
as usual -- in all the usual ways.

Things are going to happen.

I promise.

'Ah -- that Elsewhere light
bleeding through.
Listen to the voices -- the chink
of silverware.

Where are you? What are you?

I begin to fade.'

Between courses and through the din
of chatter I slip out anticipating turkey --
but taken by tone that settles on the lawns of home
-- a crispness gently gray-worn -- but gold

with ornate antique kisses.

What a day now: Coming from afar
to present world the buried span of ocean's
summertime islands lost arrive foretelling of frost
surviving only in a soft and mental breeze.
Though the town's around tables with us -- I wonder
if anyone's mirroring the tones -- as I
with these I call my own.

Surely there is joy of day -- the return
of ever-friendly costumes -- but of its other side I ask
Is my affliction common spirit -- doesn't anyone
around here know the aching of the Chords?

Still the need to gather music.

But music is the day is music all along --
how can one say or hear or sing the song without
the music saying anything that's clear?

Troubled near tremoring pines --
ever-present pang -- unremitting poke -- worry
do the boundaries ever melt away and what
will become of all -- lie will it in splinters
void of tale die senseless pale
lonely now or hence a trillion years?

Sudden sun ramps asphalt-street slate-sidewalk.

As ever -- in age-deep stillness -- feel
the pristine figures tempting birth -- existing
more than real -- themselves the scent of day and age.

What would they do with air of as-it-is today
that bleeds to utter right and true? -- What would they
do -- such souls -- at one with season's love? --
and how to live the chords of autumn chill -- the ache
of distance gone forgotten?

What would they think? Wherever would they be?

People talking inside laughing --
and I grateful as can be no matter what the case --
with outside blooming figures and their
far-off stations -- a world that begs for face.

My name called out -- I float back -- all
lightness in the level breakaday fare -- back to
table-time's redoubling decorum --
the other folk unformed and drifting-going
-- nudging for release -- hoping to come back again
-- who knows when -- who knows to where.

'I begin to cross.'

Bus Station -- longish plaster white
the waiting room -- sleepy western lonesome capsule
in olden light by Southern Lake diffused --
an antique tiled windowed room -- gilded ticket bar
and a whistling janitor pushing broom.
This scene is what he pondered standing there
light-suited dream -- gently swinging
tan valise -- strange harmony of his day -- when
with a jolt he caught himself:
Was I not -- he thought -- hold on -- was I not
done with all this here -- this place
this lake -- this light?

Hold on.

A blanket over midday
cool the air to leap for fresh and gray.
Beyond porch-pillar pine
a sky-flash.
I wait
HEAVENS BOOM
Then a million padded droplets soothe.
In glider now relaxed with pen
I seek to own the episode
walk in peace with it thereafter
simply live -- never do this thing again.
Metallic water smell -- flash

KABOOM

-- the scent of green green grass --
flash-bulb again -- a crackling detonation
and gutters soon begin cascading.
Jade water-world silences the human din
and things are about to happen.
As always -- happen.
The rain poured down. The rain poured down
The rain poured down and he --

KABOOM

And he -- and he what?
The porch behind me now -- I drift
to magic upstairs corner.
And so he stood gazing at the tall
drenched window pine.
Okay so?
In wet corner light he stood
gazing out at the tall drenched pine.
And so?
And so at length we parted ways
never having been together.

Where go to drain the doubling mind
seize the day
what valve to turn
to live at peace with sun and snow
and clouds and rain?
What must one do to stop this flow?

'I won't hold on.'

He turned around
saw one block east the Moorish beam
as a throbbing took him.
Racing fogging -- he tilt-tilted
to sight himself

in mirrored vending machine.

His new valise
down on its side -- and he on one knee
youthful hands on youthful face.

'But it flashes --

I rub my tired eyes.

A warmth that comes from seasons past
awakes within the sleeping regions of my mind
and gently occupies the bedroom --
bearing a faint cellar vibration and a simple
scent of oil to the season's new fragrances.

Outside chilly day of tousling
light and gray and inside one who's lost in it
with a pretty book: cloth sea-green --
silvered reeds swirled wild on it -- Florentine
-- gem stones outlined black and all about
and silver too Evangeline.

What of book necessitates a cover
with this sweet rendering and no other?
Nothing -- it's only a broad reflection crafted
on the gate to another world
But reader-viewer tries to integrate --
closes calmly slides work down on dark old wood
-- dignity of theme hovers borne in body --
kisses now the fading afternoon.

-- from behind my eyes to before my eyes.'

He ran his fingers slowly
through his hair -- not hearing "Sir!"
then saw Broom Man rushing at him.

"Oh -- I'm -- I'm all right."

"I know you are -- just wanted to say
Welcome!"

Nighttime -- and maybe hopes may be
fulfilled -- may be.

Those who know have said it's so.

I turn off lamp in reading room -- may
be -- and then peer out:

See nervous flakes rush street lamp glow.

Lots and lots -- look look --
now it's coming down in clots -- coming
down -- hard -- look at the ground.

Could it be?

Tomorrow's possibility rears
second-level hope -- so great it claims
a holiday in the bones:

Could it mean no death when I wake up?

Indeed it could but guarantees
do not arrive.

So -- I reason -- sleep staved off tonight
would keep my joy-in-hand alive.

The room lamp-lit again
the rootedness of rarest moment
makes a diamond of time between four walls
and things are about to happen.

But the snow came down -- the snow came down
the snow came down -- and he --

And he what?

Enough with this life-splitting need.

And he's just there -- here --

I mean -- I am -- to feast on what might
really be -- as hope flowers top
the snowy ground -- I confident to sleep.

Then peculiar brightness --
shades drawn but whiteness in the room.

Warm and muffled with stillness
nightless.

Then grate-scraping -- shovels:

Silver world -- boys bundled brown I fancy.
 Could it be I'll be alive today?
Turn myself to bedside clock: Almost eight
 and no one's come to agitate.
Killing rule is lifted off my body -- shouts
 Today there'll be no school!
Boundless new life leap tastes sparkling space
 day of mine kissed life to live alive
 I open shade on glaring face:
About the world I'm burden-free to roam
 and free I'm off to thrive!

'Goodbye.'

"I -- I've seen this face before."
"'Course you have" -- Broom Man called to him.
"And this -- this -- I don't know --
lightness -- touched somehow with rightness.
This glowing station -- theater down
the block -- the yellow-red old pedal-boats.
It seems to me -- I've been away."
"We've all been away. Yes sir -- been away."
He pointed out the window east:
"I remember standing there -- at the foot
of Southern Lake -- it was very
cold. I was thinking something. Sense it
do you? -- something much like
what I'm feeling now. I was -- well --
involved with it. I believe I
wrote about it. Oh my God! Indeed I did!
Wrote! My God -- remember that?"

Winter-bright beach is cold-breathing
far-flung blue and out there at boardwalk-foot
of Southern Lake -- with all the stands
clamed up -- but dashed with salty summer-sweets

in lumbers candy-apple roasted nuts.
Slim squeals of gulls as surreal as flying eels.
Relaxed -- I listen to the wind
buffing my pink ears -- turn and look to Town
past the Palace go-round funhouse -- old
wheel shut down -- the Moorish still so fanciful-
severe you'd think it's left by some amir.

OCEAN BOOMS

Sense it do you -- that takenness --
in the thousand things -- in World -- that verges
on a breaking -- an ever-seeming waitfulness
for release of Happenstance?
As with my music-Chords -- something wants
to give itself -- seems to have given
once upon a time when we all knew how to live.
Just as neatly piled packs of paper --
stationary stock in downtown stores -- make one ache
to pen with reason -- so the theaterland of places
yearns for Elsewhere's perfect lore.

The OCEAN BOOMS and
few steps hence I find me in the South Pavilion's
dusky hollow -- whistling ruptured Chords
in lingering tones that sail in pieces up -- make
True Life -- yes! -- into world convey.

"I remember. I was there but wasn't."
At this the Broom Man chuckled. "Ho ho -- I
like that -- good way of puttin' it."

Banished -- invisible to mind -- are the doors
of school behind me. I on icy sidewalk
walking home not willing or able to remember my exit.
Silver-smoked the ends of tree-topped streets
and child-light flakes dally down.
Kid-calls jab the tucked-in quiet -- colored bulbs
carol-hymns and evening's preparations

hide inside the cold dull day -- twirling dolls
magic pines -- in town and on the outskirts all around
-- is what I see -- in the cracking sidewalks
under step -- can smell the nestled warmth awaiting.
Once home I watch the limber rituals fold
unfold -- time's flesh golden
in returned arrangements of postures trimmings:
People visit -- their own life-baskets
brimming -- tending closer to the star atop the tree.
Mom and Grandma roll their doe crack eggs
bake sprinkle and I into the red orange blue yellow
green glowing corner find my door to Far Away.
Fresh pine -- dark-scented grove
before the eyes -- makes whirl to room a rippling
history -- courts of ages.
Later bundled under moon and porch illuminations
I read re-read the lily-lit lawn the street
the sprinkling bright curtain of all that is silence
victorious -- hear if I try the silken tap
of packing flakes feel out of nowhere tremors nearing:
A car -- headlights magnifying white
tire chains jingling -- passes by -- leaves quiet
snowfall quiet -- with a wish
for You to come who is the Reader's Eye.
Weightless-pure -- church-chimes sing a sterling tune
and tarry over town like the separating stars
of some descended constellation.
Breathing into stillness -- dwelling on -- daily acts
in lairs accrue where choirs
sing the Sensibility -- as spirits of men on earth
send their words to higher view
and children's chuckles color the crystal air --
vanish -- while even shaping-days
themselves forever seek -- the chants craving chorus
but chorus back where chant began.
Color the crystal air: Is there tale for me in there?

Fire whistle bleats -- from afar -- bleats.
Come -- on this snowy night -- come tell of who we are.

On two knees now no more to roam
he looked to summer sky
as Broom Man nodded continued sweeping
perfectly and perfect too
the familiar horn outside in street:
"Hello dear Lad -- hello!"
Through shimmering window he could see
that Love had made it Home.