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NEW ENGLAND SUITE

I

*I hear in my brain all New England echoing down
and around me,*

*And in the colony of my heart away. My land is a
factory now,*

*Or a suburb, a parking-lot, liquid in sun on the level
tar.*

*Below local histories, markers and chartered ground,
beneath brick,*

*Bright cemented disclaimers, lie crushed and still
Indian-*

*Haunted rock, lie the bones of hard people often un-
comely and cold,*

*Lie swatches of hair, and commodes, lie mirrors and
lobster-pots, letters*

*In palimpsest, arrowheads, fish-knives, and ropes
now all mummied in tar;*

*Good familial books and chipped jugs, penwipers,
samplers and useful shells;*

*Whalebones and beads, genealogy, sweetgrass and
old uphill passions;*

*Birchbark and dimity, cracked leather straps and
shrunk iron, denials;*

*And spyglasses empty of eye, the salted-green brass-
bound recallers*

*Of the masted-in-tricorne-pride, of the widowing
seas, and the land*

*Sea defines: the tides of the mind leave this rack on
memory's shore.*

II

The regional bird is the gull, protected by law, protecting

And proctoring, fouling and scavenging all our most visited shores:

Able, unlovely, raucous, persistent, at home in the storm;

Friendless, eternal, yellow of eye and whitely aware; Undiscouraged if dun, a clown to the camera, famishers' food.

The southering bird on whose feather has fallen the rumor of snow,

The flier afflicted with instinct and warned by the touch and the go

Of a soft geometric—that sniff and that sift in the needling air—

He leaves. All the birds know by the cold, and believe in the sun,
Slant as he may.

(And you watch. When last did a bird of this world
Seize a child from your bloody town, mar a woman,
accuse or unmake
Any man?)

To the birds who ensky many myths they would scorn—
Who high-bracket New England—New England is
only a flat like a map

With the waters precise in the infinite inlets, a visible ground

Laid out for their feeding; is neither to nest on nor haply to fall.

For themselves, the seen birds, whether migrants or natives, have never
Been known to give names to the curious people, to count

All the tourists or label the ankles of strangers like
herons who stalk
The emptying estuaries, quiet, with glass to the
questing eye.

III

Musselled, sea-lavendered shores throwing beaches,
low dikes
To put sand between salt of the wave and the salt of
the meadowing marshes
Where silt waves have grained into grasses of silver
and green, are unpeopled
Like the beaches that run under gull-foot, below ea-
gled cliffs and the headlands
Inspected by whales, and the uplands patrolled by
the bear overhill
And the horsy, high-shouldered moose with the ant-
lers of ossified kelp.

From the mountain to shore, through hills, rises,
valleys and rivers, odd ponds,
In their pockets, the bent stands of scrub and the
hungry foundations, all acres,
The regional beast is no proudfoot, deep in his chest,
nor a brightmane,
No flasher of eyes, nor bayonet-brandisher frightful
of man;

The regional beast is a trinity noxious to dogs, know-
ing men:
The muskrat, the skunk and the woodchuck, all drab
in defiance, all near.

IV

The regional fish is the mackerel, or else the low pas-
toral cod

In the market; but over the eyelid's horizon goes
 swimming away,
 Like a barrel of anguish, the great whale trailing his
 stintless blood
 In a moonpath of red across the Pacific savannas, and
 huge
 Green valleys down, below the white sails and crisp
 oars,
 The sharp intentions, going under and down. Both
 whaler and whale,
 Pursuit and profit, loss and return of the voyagers,
 now
 Read as history's blow; and the strike and the flurry,
 the sounding,
 The flensing, the reek of the try-out recede to a
 region
 Of rowboats for rent and of dories agap and awash
 with petunias,
 Of seafood at roadside, clean restrooms and gas. The
 regional fish
 Is the clamcake announced in electrical script; the
 seasonal fish
 Is the sucker.

And all New England echoes down and away.

V

Violet, daisy, sweet-william and black-eyed susan,
 sea-rose,
 Queen-anne's-lace, the goldenrod, sumac and orient
 hydrangia
 Unbelieved, but brought home by new-bearded son
 with new judgment in eyes—
 Like lilac, no bride was declared in the cargo; colum-
 bine, laurel

And honeysuckle, trumpet-vine, buttercup—all these
combine

To make the regional flower, with fireweed and In-
dian-pipe, paintbrush
Of devils, the gentian, the jewelweed, milkweed, the
poison-bright ivy:

These, and more, are given to see, the good herbs are
left to discover.

The flowers were pressed between leaves of the books
—the few books and good—

And the books were impressed on the brains; on a
continent brains were then sown.

VI

Whole graveyards on hillsides are stone-fledged with
beards, and upended

To heaven and frozen of chin to the flint of the soil;
whole hillsides

Are graveyards unhallowed, perimeters nubile with
birches like hopes

Of young serious virgins, all clean and surrounded
by sentinel cedars:

Dark daggers at wrong, evergreen like original sin.
Planted here

In this undulant underground churchyard, are the
hopes of New England,

Unique in their angles and white in their morals,
unique in their bite

On the sky; these fears are redeemed by their force,
which made and still makes

But metaphor of winter weather. The wind frays the
flags and shrivels

The wreaths that sag onto urns eroded, under stiff
wings

In the moving air over earth of such confined rectitude,
 Cold regard of recording stones, generations of marbled woe.

VII

Our tree is ubiquitous pine—possibly spruce or the tamarack,
 Maple whose blood bespeaks sugar in veins—but the bark is of birch,
 And the leaf is the loyal hard brown old man's hand of the oak.
 Sweet groundpine or juniper, wild grape or bayberry, brambles—all run
 Like the nerves of this ground whose berries taste tart as an apothegm.
 But the tree that the colonists planted as badge of their towns was another—
 And this is their reason—: the reach and the slendering height of the straight,
 Academic, imperious elm, like the aim of New England in art,
 Lurks in the crook of the root gripping soil, in its thirst among rocks.

VIII

The regional colors are wilder by contrast and subtler than Mexico.
 The urge of the autumn, the accent of frost, makes the primary chords:
 The scarlets and oranges, yellows and purples, the high exclamations
 In leaf, and the firmer, full statements in fruit.
 Brown earth and pale sand,

And impossible snow make the canvas. The sky and
the sea do the rest:

All the blue, gray and silver, all greens not alive that
can change;

All the changes among them, and sunsets in season,
all weathering motions.

The regional hues that are minor are man's: the
glosses of lanterns

And tar, the dulled ictus of rust and the glint of the
hair-thin ring,

Wedding-gold. The regional colors dream under neon,
and wait.

IX

The life of New England in centuries gone is a guess,
or proverbial guff.

Lust could wear homespun and wonder on calico, sun
sweeten sweat

On the skin, or skin get the alternate ache of dry
salt from the sea;

Love could walk barefoot and brown with the dust
of the sun, or go booted,

And berried in cheek and bright lip by the hollying
frost. The life

Of the regional youth was no glimpse between head-
stones of wives early gone

From the childbed and footstones of children still-
born or but shown for a season

Or two; the life of the youth of this country was not
just a summer

Following thaw, before blizzard, a sun between snows.
The youth

Of this region was everything strong, little easy: if
hard, yet it shone.

—Cleaning and bleaching, mending and patching,
 painting with paint,
 Oil or varnish, with whitewash or tar; the quilting
 and candling preserving
 And saving, here making and there making do—but
 they made!

To mend

Is a form of *to make*, and to paint is a shaping, an
 outward approval;
 Doing without is an aspect of using: the use of each
 thing is to wear
 It utterly out as loving old couples have done of their
 bodies,
 And yet live and apparently love; as thinkers have
 whittled their brains
 Into words, and still see things and laugh; as the
 poets I know
 From this region can go to the antarctic ice-cap, alone
 with a pen,
 And there make New England of nothing, or scrim-
 shaw whole Indies of ice.

X

*These states are my mind, and my blood with their
 history flows all down
 And away, bleeding west in an empire and south in
 a passion; these states
 Are the map of my intricate heart, and no orderly
 page and no print
 Can reduce them to handbook. The mind flows away
 to beginnings in water,
 Past sand, over rocks and rock-pools, to the rising of
 hills through the pines
 And the pine-heavy air of all lands, and across the
 whole cloud of the sky.*

*Yet my mind is this country of slower than tropical,
longer, more passionate
Growth, and this ocean contains my imaginings;
mountains suggest
My haphazard projects; astonishing snows are my
silences, gales
My level declaring of Autumn. In August untended
wild roses
That overwhelm silvering shingles of cedar amount
to my tenderness.
Quite like a monument, steepled and peeling of paint,
worth preserving
By the civic of mind, I am nothing alone without gift
of this ground
To grow in and give in the double-bed dark to my
boys in the sacrament
Love before driving the seed of my being, long warm
with a wife
And all green with a poem, under the quilt of this
elderling earth.*

Charles Philbrick

IN MEMORY

Purple shadows gather towards the night.
A light no man can see glows inwardly.
And I, a stranger in a rented attic
Chamber, lie upon my shrouded bed,
In the twilight of the week, remembering

How it was angels and heaven then. The sun
Ran wet and golden through the curtains,
Splashing a child, as all alone he sat
Among the rushing notes and danced his dreams
In the holy hush of noon, in the hot and liquid
Silence of the Sabbath sun. Beside
Him on the flowered plate, some silken fruit
An old and roughened hand had polished, a slice
Of doughy cake, raisin rich and veined
With cinnamon, dispensed with care, and measured
Sparingly into the eager hands
Of the expectant grandchild. Later still,
The steaming cup and icy chip of sugar,
Melting, tongue-tipped, in the amber sip
Of tea. But first from sainted pillows rose
The breath of sacred sleep; lovely and low
It rose and fell, scattering praise and whispering
God's almighty word that it was good.
Above him on the wall, in faded navy
Tunic, Little Boy Blue slept on forever,
One arm across his face, a knee drawn up,
And horn forgotten in the olive meadow.
While bright behind their dull and dirtied windows,
A swarm of rainbow fish flashed through the water,
Twinkled gold and red among the leaf-fringed
Coils of grass, or lingered, quivering,
Above the sunburnt sand and stretching snails.
And on his port of glass a fierce and frenzied
Fly started, raced his prop, and flew . . .
As fled in unremitting time forever
Gone, the holy hush, the burning god,
The sleepers' hymn, and I, the child among
The dancing notes, floating his dreams in the hot
And honeyed river of the wine-blessed day.

Samuel A. Weiss

THREE POEMS

Heron in Swamp

Had I not caught him by a swerve of eye
In movement as his natural element,
Air plastered to his wings, thin falls of sun
Cascading down his breast, legs locked in flight,
I should have thought him reed, so pure he stands
Frozen in silence; bird into vegetable
Transforms hard fact to fluid miracle;
So thinks himself a reed that reed becomes.
If there's such sanctuary in belief
I'll trust the verdict of the hoodwinked eye—
Know, if I clap my hand,
One reed will stay, though all the swamp fly off.

Frances Minturn Howard

The True and Happy Fable of Beauty and the Beast

Her sisters asked for gowns and gems
To glitter on their ugliness,
Like stunted trees so bright with birds
Their true proportions none might guess.
But Beauty asked the hardest thing—
She wanted one white rose, to be
The starkly crystallised, thorned and pearly
Symbol of her virginity.
Fine gowns and gems were quickly bought—

