

**A Poem for Boston from the Farrington (title added Nov 23, 2013)**

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A poem from the Farrington, Room 127

I wonder how many writers  
Sat here before me  
Pen in hand  
In this boarding house  
On once marshy land  
With typewriter and darkness  
and thoughts in hand.

When I am here I am closer  
to the heartbeat of new arrival  
to the valley  
of the soul  
the breast  
of the mother  
of democracy  
a sense of real freedom  
of the great oak forests'  
shadow of memory.

~

Sometimes  
I can still know  
their echo and whisper  
through the smog and honking,  
hum and lights.

When I am here I am a  
conductor and a receiver,  
and energy streams  
And it is as if I'm whole.  
But I miss the stars  
And the clean air, and  
the pine trees of my youth.

This place has a smell to it though,  
like a lover it is dear  
and distinct.  
Like my grandma's green acres.

Here I sit on the cradle and grave of civilizations.  
Of change and ideas.  
Of progress and modernism.  
Of history and time.  
Great lakes and streams flowed before me,  
Great writers of old, Thoreau not far away  
at Walden.

I wonder what times were like in days before me.  
How these very streets buzzed and pulsed,  
Becoming today with each sound.

How deep molasses flowed  
And swallowed men whole.  
The commons were a battlefield,  
The peoples' commons.  
Now they are a battlefield of rights  
To air and water and land,  
no longer commons,  
but corporate pollution.

The great old churches,  
And homes in Newton, Cambridge, Jamaica Plain.  
How beautiful.  
How ornate and expansive.  
A sign of the economic divide ~  
a reflection and constant reminder  
Of others' poverty and misfortune.  
But still so stately beautiful,  
Attractive and appealing.  
What history they possess  
in their long strong beams.  
What a share of men and women they have seen,  
lovemaking and fighting,  
begging and chiding.

When I am here I am all these things.  
I feel them and taste them.  
I taste the poverty of immigrants,  
I taste the sweep crisp aroma  
Of Indian food in the air,  
And autumn leaves making their way  
to earth.  
I taste others' happiness and sorrows,  
And read their hearts in their eyes.

Lifestyles of the rich and famous,  
Throwing away trash like it was nothing.  
Wasting and wanting.  
Lifestyles of the homeless,  
Turning garbage into cover  
And waste into food  
More sustainably than "civil" men.

Keep it dirty and affordable  
A friend of mine once said,  
Keep it dirty and affordable.  
And maybe we should.

-k. ilseman