

he couldn't shut up about it  
I walked out of there  
convinced  
that one must take great care  
when deciding  
just WHO should be allowed to read poetry

#### WISDOM HAS BECOME A WELTER OF GENERALIZATIONS

we toss around millions  
of people  
on the end of our tongues  
that's the price  
of armchair omnipotence  
we're bludgeoned with images  
of disarray  
local news amounts to local crime time  
you'd think there's nothing else  
but horror  
& yet  
day after day  
on the streets of metropolitan Boston  
I see people quietly going about  
their business  
or clogging the streets  
by the thousands  
as they Walk For Hunger  
Run For Real Estate  
or Bike For Buicks  
absurdity & madness  
the twin pillars of our age

#### ONE OF THOSE MOODS THAT CAN LAST FOR YEARS

I've gone thru times  
when I've given money to any jackoff  
with a sad story  
that includes Oxfam  
Disabled Vets  
lung disease  
these days I pass  
countless people on the streets  
working their posts  
waiting for fresh sympathy  
today was Harvard commencement  
caps & gowns clog the streets  
the street people line the benches  
I average about \$5000 a year  
without health coverage  
why in the hell should I feel guilty

about street people?  
Harvard students can't afford to tip  
until they graduate  
street people & Harvard students  
want the same thing  
the students are just a little more  
disgusting about it

#### THE PRESIDENT

black is such an inaccurate word  
like negro was before it  
you had red hair & green eyes  
but you were a nigger all the same  
to them honkies  
who turned your stint in the Army  
into something unspeakable  
you'd be 83 today  
conditional tense of course  
because you were only 49  
when the end came  
you were one of the greatest tenor men  
of all time  
your imitators walked away with the bread  
while you sat at the window drinking gin  
& listening to Sinatra  
Lester Young  
you were too gentle for this planet  
happy birthday anyway

#### OUT BACK

there are a number of parking lots  
two houses with backyards  
& of course a back street or two  
it's quiet now  
every day two trucks idle  
on one of the back streets  
it's a loud droning sound  
sort of like a chainsaw  
it's been going on for months  
this is the car theft capital  
out back late at night  
someone's car alarm will kick in for hours  
during the day  
a little girl in one of those houses  
screams as though she were being tortured  
maybe that's what's happening  
at 5:30 or 6 in the morning  
someone honks repeatedly