

PROGRESS? (1983)

this electric doesn't make that much noise but  
as I type after midnight  
the dog in the yard north and east barks to  
the sound  
but the people abide  
and for this I'm thankful  
like  
I think I told you of the place on Kingsley where  
the woman upstairs would beat with a  
broomhandle  
on the floor  
when I typed  
as the woman downstairs  
would beat on the ceiling with her  
broomhandle.

those broomhandle ladies were a  
distraction but  
I just sucked down more  
beer  
and beat the keys  
harder.

the worst, though,  
was the guy on Oxford  
down below me  
he had a massive  
voice and he would  
scream:  
"JESUS CHRIST, KNOCK IT  
OFF WITH THAT FUCKING  
THING!"  
this one would, at times,  
give me pause  
before I continued  
but strange  
he never complained when  
my girlfriend and I had  
our drunken arguments  
which could be heard  
half a block  
away.

each place I lived in  
had its detractors  
and I was usually given a  
ten p.m. finishing time by  
the landlord or  
manager  
after which  
I was allowed to lay back  
and listen to the babble of their  
tv sets.



so tonight  
in retrospect  
when I listen to the barking of this  
good wooly dog  
I am almost sorry that I intrude upon its  
life  
but good literature is usually  
disturbing, they  
say, so  
bark away  
as I pour this wine and torture this  
IBM  
# 6126-II-0026005.

#### THE UNINITIATED (1984)

I was drinking with this fellow the other  
night, not a bad sort, young but not a bad  
sort, compared to the others, you know.  
I live an isolated life. don't mind that, prefer  
that,  
but now and then  
(mostly then)  
I won't drink alone.

it went all right.  
we exchanged a few sad tales of bad luck  
with women.  
we had some good laughs.

then he got a bit  
drunk.  
be bent forward, grinning  
slyly, said,  
"come on now, you got to admit you probaby  
miss the times you had on  
skid row, on the bum, all  
that...."

it's when a fellow talks that  
way, even if he's not a bad  
sort, you know he's never been  
there.

not that you have to have been there  
but once you get out  
almost everything that happens after that  
seems blessedly  
marvelous.

"no," I told him, "I don't miss the  
row...."

"ah, come on," he said, "cut the  
shit!"