

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!"