

## *Town Road Forty-Five*

*for Bill Jerome*

In good-natured parody to  
The flashy cascade of Furnace Brook,  
    The old town road  
    Worries along in  
    Modesty and potholes  
The length of the ridge above the village.

Through the valley where everywhere  
Half-risen from the ground like tombstones,  
    The long-abandoned  
    Implements of pioneers  
    Rust and crumble  
In the bright corrosive autumn air,

To the last stubborn farmhouse standing  
Cracked and resolute at its conclusion,  
    The road unwinds  
    In quiet persistence  
    Among the wood-ferns,  
Translucent skeletons on the forest floor.

Beneath the night's pavilion,  
The road's a dusty platform where  
    The wizened spirits  
    Of the early settlers  
    Dance ghostly quadrilles  
To the clicking of the wind in naked birch;

But by day, overhung with the lively colors  
Of obstinate saplings, town road forty-five  
    Makes a gentle inroad  
    To the soul of earth  
    Laid bare for an instant  
In the certain light of the white October afternoon.