Barry Sternlieb

DEMOCRACY IN COAL COUNTRY
"When the psalm sings instead of the singer" W.W.

There's an old graveyard
down 41 where he loves
to sit and hear wind
through the bucktooth stones,
letting sweet disregard
reign his mind. He's learned
it's worthless planting silence
if, hill by hill, the words
find their way across earth.

A smoke-eyed bitch limping
wise among weeds keeps up
with the invisible,
trails a faint pulse
of scent, stone to stone,
patient as the backcountry.

Heads down, neither is conscious
of the pale morning moon
whose step dampens grass
like a wish to forget,
no more, no less,
what the past will become.

Robert Vas Dias

BROOKLYN

It's prolific, maybe you never stopped
to think: more poets were born
in Brooklyn who don't live there any more,
in many one- and two-family dwellings
of identical shape and texture arranged
in rows predominantly of brownstone,
or brick, with now-and-again a run of limestone.

It is too large for anyone to take in
whole in a lifetime / the sound
from a rooftop is of a boat
whistling down in the harbor,
trucks hustling their loads on the Belt Parkway,
fire, police, ambulance emergency sirens
day and night, children playing, and jets
in the holding-patterns for LaGuardia & JFK (not
even in Brooklyn): it is the great breeding
ground of America, there all problems
and some solutions are found: no wonder
Walt settled there for a time though he escaped
with his poems across the river and into
New Jersey.

In Brooklyn, thinking of vistas, always there are
visions of the ensemble just visible over the
tenements,
across the harbor, the bridge, and over
the enterprising, irresistible
and always uncontrollable States.