

On the way out,  
a large branch blocks our cars  
from leaving the cemetery.  
Moving aside that antler shed  
by some other life, he looks back  
and smiles, gathering me with his eyes.  
I remember how lightly he left then.  
Instead of good-bye he said:  
I will see you again.  
And I am inclined to believe  
that certain men know ways  
to alter even the unrelenting  
passages of space and time.



**John C. Pine**

## BLOCK ISLAND

*The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early  
and stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went  
and had a good time;  
You should have been with us that day  
round the chowder-kettle.*

Walt Whitman

My sister and her husband live  
On Block Island in a house they built themselves  
On two fertile acres off Beacon Hill Road.  
There blackberries grow abundantly in August,  
And tourists from Boston and Providence  
Gorge themselves on the succulent fruit.  
In winter my sister's kids go skating  
On their own private pond. No tourists then!

My sister's husband earns a living clamming  
In the Great Salt Pond. Every day or two,  
He takes his catch of cherry stones, quahogs  
And littlenecks and puts them on the ferry  
To be picked up by the wholesale dealer  
In Galilee who weighs them on his scale  
And writes out a check. My brother-in-law  
Quit his white-collar job in Syracuse  
Six years ago and settled on Block Island  
To take up the tonger's difficult trade.  
His boat is a 25-foot, Maine-type  
Lobster boat built in the Tripp Boatyard  
In Massachusetts in 1925.  
It used to belong to a man named Turtle  
Who fished out of Block Island before the war  
Until the hurricane of '38  
Virtually destroyed the fishing industry.  
Now summer sailors in their sleek pleasure craft  
Crowd New Harbor from May to September,  
And sometimes hail my brother-in-law,  
Raking the bottom of the Great Salt Pond  
Aboard his little boat, the Erika,  
To buy a dozen clams fresh from the deep.

Once after clamming we stopped at Captain Nick's  
To watch the Duran-Leonard fight on TV.  
Sitting at the dimly lighted bar drinking beer,  
We found ourselves sitting next to Nick himself,  
An ex-prize fighter who promptly ordered  
Two ice-cold Budweisers on the house!

The house my sister and her husband built  
Is a modified A-frame with a view  
Of the ocean and of enough stone walls  
To make Robert Frost laugh demonically  
In his firmament. They sleep in the loft  
Beneath a skylight through which they can see  
The Concorde on its evening flight to Europe  
Tracking its way slowly across the sky,  
A small star among all the other stars.