

# POETRY BY THE PAGE

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## SOUTHERN TIER

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I give you hardwood hills of orange and flame,  
hardrock living in the hollows, where houses  
are tar paper, tin roofed, cinder blocks; where the  
shallow Chemung valleys the hillsides, and the  
names are lost in their Indian past: Painted  
Post, Big Flats, Horseheads, Elmira, Cohocton.  
I give you finger lakes of glacial water,  
long hard winters and brief sweet springs; where it is  
overcast most of the year and the factory  
smoke of Corning Glass Works clouds the crowned ridges,  
the far hills to the north. Hilled in, houses flock  
and crowd, nestled in hedgerows, braced for the snow.  
Snow and flood are constants, but there are moments:  
coined orange leaves, the gilded corn, jeweled crocus  
braving the thin northern air. I give to you  
Ithaca, Cayuga, Canadaigua, grape  
vines, old schools, thin soil, rusty cars clumped in yards,  
marigolds sunk in bathtubs, pinwheels in grass,  
and always the hills, the gathering hills, and  
the silver river ribboning the valley.

