

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## **Lowell Visits**

By Richard Fein

Back from the dead, chain-smoking, inviting  
me in and introducing me to his wife,  
Elizabeth Hardwick, his cigarette punctuates—  
“Richard’s written a good article on me.”  
I’m still not ready to show him my poems.  
We once lived not far from one another,  
he on W. 67th, off of Central Park West,  
I on W. 93rd, off of Central Park West.  
Bus or train or long walk covered the distance.  
“You see, Cal”—I’d graduated from Mr. Lowell—  
“no relation of mine ever died in the Civil War.  
Like Delmore, I’m from the apartments of Brooklyn  
and had to subway over the bridge to Manhattan.  
You see, Yiddish was in my bones in a way Latin  
never could be. It wasn’t lit. but in my bones.  
It was all that shame—puzzlement, and claim.  
‘The brassy glare of a gold tooth socketed in his lower gum  
branded the Yiddish my Uncle Max expelled,’” I quote myself.  
Cal takes a long drag and blows out, “Delmore!”  
and over my head he watches the smoke, ghost to ghost.