

THE SHOCKS WE PUT OUR PITCHFORKS INTO

The shocks said that winter
Was coming. Each stood there,
Said, "I've given myself away.
Take me. It's over."

And we did. With the shiny tips
Of our forks, their handles so
Healthy and elegant,
We slipped each bundle free,

Gave it to the load.
Each bundle was like
A soul, tucked back
Into the cloud of souls.

That's how it will be
After death—such an abundance
Of souls, all together—
None tired, in the heavy wagon.

HAWTHORNE AND THE ELEPHANT

Hawthorne's walking stick—very short—lay
Under glass at the Customs House. On the wharf,
A crab shell, emptied by a gull, lies alone.
His walking sticks lie near . . . but the crab is gone,
Like Hawthorne. Bedrooms were low;
You were taxed for high ceilings in those days.
Ships brought licorice and peppers. Hawthorne's
father
Died of a fever off the coast of Sumatra,
Guides say, and *America*, his ship, brought
The first elephant here in 1794.
Water got short on the way; to save the elephant
They gave her thirty bottles of beer a day.
She—Bette—died in Maine, an alcoholic.
How alert we were at the House of Seven Gables!
Clifford's room is the little one up the secret stairs.

READING IN A BOAT

I was glad to be in that boat, floating
Under oak leaves that had been
Carved by crafty light.

How many times during the night
I laughed, because She
Came near, and stayed, or returned.

The boat stopped, and I woke.
But the pages kept turning. I jumped
Back in the book, and caught up.

I was not in pain, not hungry,
Friend, I was alive, sleeping,
And all that time reading a book.