

HOME FOR THE AGED by Elizabeth Brewster

The old men sit, five of them on a bench,
Half sleeping, half awake, dazed by the sun,
In the muted afternoon, between one broadcast ball
game and the next.
Their thoughts are leaves that drifted across a sky
perpetually autumn.
Their hands are folded: they have done with the Sunday
papers.

Decorously shabby, decently combed and clean,
They watch with half closed eyes the passers-by,
The loitering lovers, the boys on bikes, the cars
Rushing eagerly to some scene of active life.

Their lives are folded up like the papers, and who can
know
Whether their years passed sober and discreet,
With the measured, dutiful, regular click of a clock,
Or whether some old violence lingers still
In faded headlines on their dusty brains?
What boyhood do they wander in, what middle age
forget?
And do they watch their dwindling stock of time
With hope, or resignation, or despair?