

Sam Cornish

Muddy Water

for W.R. Burnett and William Wellman

Yellow Sky a sun and windy
Dust old cattle broke down town

The end of nowhere waiting
For a little gold dust to bring it back

It's a ghost in the desert
But sometimes sidewinders

The riders cross
The salt flats at the waterin'
Hole

Head down in the muddy
Water the brown men drink

See the bottom of the stream
Water in their nostrils washes

Their sand dirty hair but these
Men will never

Be clean they are the bank
Robbers Owlhoots with farmers'

And small ranchers' money
In their saddlebags

Drinking muddy water
Outside the town

Of Yellow Sky ghost town
The wind blows through

Saloon doors swing and creak
The sidewinders are thirsty

Sam Cornish is one of America's premier poets. In 2008 he was named the city of Boston's first Poet Laureate. Among the books he has published are *Generations* (Beacon Press, 1970), *Sam's World* (Decatur House Press, 1978), *Songs of Jubilee, New and*

Selected Poems (Unicorn Press, 1986), *1935* (Ploughshares Books 1990) *Folks Like Me* (Zoland Books, 1993), *Cross a Parted Sea* (Zoland Books, 1996) and *An Apron Full of Beans* (CavanKerry Press, 2008). He has also written several chapbooks, pamphlets and children's books. He taught for many years at Emerson College.