



## **Sam Cornish – Six Poems**

### **Bless this House**

putting on the neck  
tie Negro father ready

for Sunday here's  
the son of the man

who makes the day  
for rest this clean

shirt is starched

for and the black string  
tie pulled tight

beneath his collar  
before his

God with his family  
thankful this day

this wife  
these children

here today thankfully  
tomorrow

## **GENERATION TALK**

When jazz

Was cool

And the cats

Were downtown

They said

the drummer

Is a man

White

Folks love

the music

of old

jazz clubs

the smoke

is the faces

of the band

street men

crazy men

crazy

downtown

## COURT'S IN SESSION

Judge Roy Bean cowboy judge and jury  
in a bar take off your hat

boots on feet upon the floor  
no riding into saloons court's in session

whores outside chewing tobacco allowed  
no spittin branding cattle ain't your own

talking back to Roy that's Judge Roy  
Bean holding you in contempt

stole a horse hanging at noon God rest  
your unwashed horsetheiving soul I sure  
don't whoring on Sunday  
fine but you keep the noise down

beating your wife tell me one thing son  
did she step out of line

## THE GOOD FARMER

was a dirt poor man working hard  
living with his wife and son

the drought helping the misery along  
but this year

he hog tied a rustler with a bounty  
on his Jayhawking head

and that was better than crops growing  
good and ready for the table

thank you Jesus he thought  
there is hanging in Yuma

a reward for the outlaw  
sitting at his table waiting for some grub

before they take the stage  
and then the *3:10 to Yuma*\*

\*Van Heflin in *3:10 to Yuma*, story by Elmore Leonard, film directed by Delmer Daves

## **THERE IS A TREE IN YUMA\***

The bad cowboy  
shot clerks drunks  
nasty cowhands

grinned at frightened women  
he meant them no harm

he hated banks  
he was a crook

with a price on his head  
handcuffs round his wrist

a farmer led him to town  
at the end of a rope

he just grinned  
there ain't a tree anywhere

in Yuma  
with my name on it

*\*Glenn Ford in 3:10 To Yuma*

## Old Best Friends

The man at the table  
With a smile  
A firm handshake  
Will have a cup  
Of coffee  
And talk about the poem  
Like it is an old friend  
Of many years  
Someone he is glad  
To see again  
Good friends  
In poetry are rare  
And hard to find.

**Sam Cornish** grew up in Baltimore, MD and has lived in Boston, MA for the past 40 years. In the 1960s, he was a literature consultant for the Enoch Pratt Public Library in Baltimore, where he created and co-edited *Chicory*, an anthology of writing by Baltimore residents. Following his move to Boston, he was a teacher at the Highland Park Community School in Roxbury, MA, and was also active in the Poetry in the Schools program in Boston and Cambridge, MA. During the 1970s, he was a curriculum specialist at the Educational Development Center in Newton, MA where he developed curriculum materials for the public school systems of Philadelphia, Delaware, Washington, DC and other places. In the early 1980s, he was the Literature Director of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities and subsequently, an Instructor in Creative Writing at Emerson College until his retirement in 2006. During that same period, he created for UrbanArts an anthology of writing engraved on concrete slabs installed in subway stations on the MBTA Orange Line. He has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Massachusetts Council on the Arts and St. Botolph Society, among others. In addition to his nine books of poetry and for children, he has been published in dozens of periodicals, including *Essence*, *Ploughshares*, *The Harvard Review*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Boston Globe*. From 2008 through 2013 he served as the first Poet Laureate of the City of Boston.