

The poem copied below, as example of what I call civic poetry, was composed for the mayoral inauguration in Gloucester, MA, in 2002. It appears in my new book of poems, *Taking the Train of Singularity South from Midtown*. Both this poem and the title poem of the book are celebrations of American democracy and diversity and reflect a deep love of country from the left. The poem is now being set to music by the composer Robert Bradshaw (<http://www.robertjbradshaw.com/>) and will premiere later in 2017.

Good Harbor, Home

(Anthem for Gloucester)

Waves break on outcrop rock: granite,
fire-formed and hard, headland granite—
no coddled cape, no sandbar,
nothing soft in her city, no knickknack:
Gloucester-by-God, attitude granite.
The beaches are broken by wetland, woods of oak
and pine, grace in paintscape chasms, coves,
the harbor of ships, sailboats, a fishing fleet
today inner-harbored, home from the beast-broth
sea, safely moored to Cape and continent:
Cookie-cut, cradle states of the seaboard,
rust-belt, Bible-belt, rivers
priming the plains, Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois,
the corn of Illinois and Iowa, the Dakotas, Kansas,
squared-away states stretching west
to the Rockies, Cascades, a rival coast and ocean--
our daily wake, the entire entrained nation.

Its originals: Ojibwe, Pequod, Agawam, Pawnee.
Later, tribes of Irish, Latinos, Italians,
Poles and Portuguese, Africans, Asians... We,
the potluck people, power in this rare republic,
experiment America imagined over the land, are aged
or tender, bold or shy, yet rulers by right
and by law, the law of nature and of nature's God,
true believers in clamor and compromise, believers
in reason, and so debating rights, wrongs, damning
terror and terrorists in just, seething sorrow,
yet protecting loudly law, the process of law,
stunned as the young to stagger and strut at once.

The noise of debate makes music. Now
playing in this sacred city hall, home
of mellow music, the oaths of public office,
friends elected in a free, local vote
to swear and serve under one weathervane,
minded by murals on history and honest government,
nothing abstract, far away or federal,
servants and citizens balanced in the same boat,
the ship of state a schooner, grand as Gloucester,
seaworthy, wise in the rhythms of salt water
and safeguarded today in the good harbor, home.

What matters happens here! We,
each of us proud, elect, the people of Gloucester,
by law and by luck neighbors in a great nation,
trust power for a term to others, themselves
strong in our common strength, the cast of democracy
in time and tide, a city's lapstraked lives,
and so blessed, confident of grace and granite, bear
witness to America on the broad, abiding sea.