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## Songs of himself

Scott Harney grew up in Charlestown, the first kid to attend Charlestown High School for all three years to go to Harvard, where he was a student of Robert Lowell's. A posthumous collection of Harney's poetry gathers his work — wise, honed, and richly felt — which was almost entirely unpublished during his life; he died, at age 63, last year. **"The Blood of San Gennaro"** (Arrow-smith) offers us a body of work that is clear-eyed, melancholic, that vibrates with the mystery under the matter-of-fact. Many of the poems are set around here, in Charlestown, in Somerville, at the Museum of Science, and many, too, in Italy. "Though prayers each day go up in smoke,/ our stung eyes climb each chimney and spire/ and search for a sky that could almost care." In an elegant introduction, Harney's partner, the Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Megan Marshall, writes of meeting him in that Lowell poetry workshop, and of his work shifting between the two modes of personalizing the universal or universalizing the personal. He believed "autobiography is embedded in every work of art," and what we can take from these works of art is that of a man who spent a life loving, and therefore living through the pain of loss, and knowing that's the cost, and loving and loving again. "I love this life because there is no other,/ the way I loved a girl who took me down an alley/ and let me press against her by the light/ of kitchen windows."

The late poet Scott Harney  
pictured in Venice in 2000.



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