

BILL KNOTT

MACHINES

What kind of machine
will these deer
invent next?
Some fantastic thing—with colored buttons, zingers, trells,
lights—beginning where we lost them,
ending in their hides. A device
to tell the future—no,
fish have already done that—
or maybe a lie-detector that breaks down
at the first sign of sweat—or an electric-chair
that shorts-out when the eyes go blank—
or some bomb that mists, and squeaks, when a nipple leaves a mouth—.

Where are the other inventions
all covered with lost snow
way, way out there somewhere, where
the first airplane is being constructed by birds,
the first car by antelope whose feet
never touch the ground.

SOME PROBLEMS THAT KEEP COMING UP or, THE THEORY OF POSTHUMOUS POETRY

I invented a new school of poetry, which I call "posthumous poetry"
But I gave it up, it was too
Boring and reminded me of a woman I'd met once
Screeching love
(This women is now going with a worthless man named Len.
He has money, of course.) I said worthless—
But he's with her and I'm not, so that makes me the worthless one.
I'm worthless, I gave up the manifesto, I mailed it to my future addresses
To surprise myself.
Anyway a new school of poetry is not in the national interest,
Consisting as it does of many trillion tons of manure,
And language beyond the snowflake.

That jewess is out there somewhere, scribbling on her eyebrows
A sex invitation, writing a death-to-Knott letter across her lips with lip-
stick
Torturing the mirror. Young artists for sale.
I was one, a promising young poet or a promising young ending,
And though I didn't compose a sonata at age 4, nor graduate calculus
at 12,
I am a prodigy of death, which pleased her. In the end
She got fed-up with my barnyard wisdom, my pet-names for her
("Saliva"
"Bird-drop," "Snow White and the seven penises"),
my knock-out kisses.

The truth is somewhere,
In books used to wedge open doors,
In newspapers jammed under the radiator to even it up,
Like poets adrool in springtime
When the air is as flushed as bathtub sex,
The truth is somewhere, why not in posthumous poetry
(I tied those 34 epileptics together in a line
They were timed to go-off one minute apart
By the light of firecracker-heaven I composed those justly-famous epi-
grams:
Yes.
No.
Maybe.)

I'd like to start this new school of poetry, but
I don't have any money, so I have to live in cheap rooming-houses
Where the other roomers play their TV's and radios all day and all
night.
Every other poet I can think of has a quiet place to write,
They sit in their apartments and think "Knott's
Work is not so hot." A dumptruk goes past almost every minute.
Those garbage-dumps must be fantastic places. I must visit them soon
On a good-will tour.

In the end, or promising young ending, I'm sorry
For not filling that gap in your "uhhs" with a new school of poetry,
Like a spigot on a corpse.

LOVE POEM TO YOU

I will love you as far as I can throw you
then I will throw you some more

your veins are carrying us to
unanimous-poem climax

from my lips escape the mating-cries of extinct animals
—now do you understand the radiocarbon-dating process?

once I had to leave you, so
I arranged for earth-tremors at night
so in your sleep you would think I was caressing you

o you

you orbiting the earth
at a height of 5 feet 8

moon

childhood mired in light

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST GROCERIES

The violence in the newspapers is pure genius
A daily gift to the reader
From a poet who wants to keep in good with us
Brown-noser wastepaperbasket-emptier

I shot 136 people that day
2 were still alive when I killed them
Why do people imagine themselves to be exhumed movie-stars,
I mean rats still chewing on them and all that flesh peeling, why do
they walk around like that?

I'm going to throw all of you into the refrigerator
And leave you to claw it out with the vegetables and meats