

BILL KNOTT

## THE END

*Pain has petrified the threshold.—Trakl*

A threshold is everything that can be  
seen in the space of the endurance of  
our openness: thus at the conclusion  
of *The Searchers* John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to  
escape always the outward-gazing-lust  
of that thrust doorway toward the horizon  
or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit  
is lost and we who had followed his flight  
from the intimacy of this interior, we  
must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile  
while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

## SNUFFED

The candle's leaf  
 is what we call those drops  
 that cling solidified  
 up along its length  
 after it's been blown out—

We switch on the overheads. Outside,  
 branches bode, bode, bode.  
 What  
 do they predict?

Descent is all,  
 they're not specific, unlike  
 our phrase  
 for this froze ooze  
 (which beads the bole)  
 (and which is more like sap than leaf)  
 this effluvium, this sheaf  
 that trickled from a flame we lit once  
 days or years ago.

Time, our sentence, is specific.  
 Memory, its syntax, vague.  
 The melt is where they meet—  
 inksoil syllables dribbling down a page.

## THE WORD

I am the windowkeeper  
of the Tower of Babel.

Whoever built this place  
put one window at its top  
and one door at its base.

I dream of the door far below,  
where all the commerce,  
the majestic intercourse  
must pass—  
or so I imagine.

Parsecs above that possible  
bustle I attend our tower's  
sole window.

Up here nothing.

Forget a lookout vigil:  
this pane's too high  
to spy an army  
or a peacenik approaching.

Glass I wash and wash always  
for the sake of the light or dark  
it admits, but what is it?—

An eyepiece of clouds  
for someone's height;  
a cyclops outlet  
for no-one's sight.

And what if  
that door down there's  
as little used as this—  
and the doorkeeper too,  
his efforts  
fallow as mine—

if there is a doorkeeper,  
if I'm not alone  
in here.

If we exist—  
if one day soon  
we can open  
our vents our hearts  
simultaneously,

mightn't some stir occur  
in the vacuum  
of this hollow highrise,  
provoking its ghost  
to whisper at least  
one pure, one  
pre-word word—

Maintaining my post  
would otherwise be a waste,  
hopeless

if not  
for the thought of that.