

⚡ Winner of the PIP Gertrude Stein Awards for Innovative Poetry in English  
2005-2006

Under the Bulb: *id est*

Pebbles stuck between rubber grooves  
of insulated shoes. Dog star  
to the left of the belt. This  
is the depth of the natural year.

All the woods are still  
and bare. Bright dogwood  
stems along stone walls,  
bees alight by the roadside  
in winter thaw.

There's no moon, then a snow moon.  
Skunks come out to mate, squabble and fight late.

Even the starlings are missed.  
Frozen grass offers little.  
I see the sparrows gather  
near the one feeder on the block.  
Six people froze to death this week  
taking odds against shelter,  
plus a hiker in New Hampshire  
whose tent and stove were not enough.

Am I the poet who loves the smell  
of calf-skin boards and ink  
on the thick pages of old books?  
Or am I the one who prefers  
pints pouring from a brass tap  
and noisy cooking from the bar kitchen?

Mozart, they say, kept a pet starling.  
Reznikoff saw them in Hollywood  
riding "jauntily" on palm trees.

Otherwise a cold Sunday slips past

with news of death and failure.  
The moon held in a cloud  
like a fish in a net. Poetry,  
said Wieners, is "some way  
of filling loneliness / without politics"  
some way to keep in touch.

Two women disappeared at sea,  
kayaking in fog. A boy  
lost in the woods died  
of exposure. Long after  
her murder, a girl's diary  
haunts the cop. An old man  
killed another  
fighting over golf balls.

Rather than see things  
as if out the window,  
porch lights and vines, deep shadows  
past blue glass, the turn of car lights  
lightly grazes the wall  
of books and photographs.

There is a demand to begin again.  
There is, *id est*, a compulsion  
to rake or fashion stanzas.  
The vocabulary heaves  
because we cannot understand  
the simple things being said:  
"This is a child"  
"This is an exit wound" Still,

in the age of suicide bombers  
the warnings speak of packages  
unattended.

As if the entire city  
had been packed in salt  
or the sea surged thru here  
and snapped whip-like

back again: the white streets,  
cars and buses go  
unlicked by desperate deer.

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