

the skull of the dog i am very
proud of. it is my prize possession.
i don't ask it any questions,
and it doesn't ask me any.
i'll keep it with me as i grow old.
it will keep me company.
i admire the teeth
it has left.

— Ronald Baatz

Mt. Tremper NY

SNOWBALL

i drive home from work
mid february
ten thousand essays graded
in ten years of teaching
thirty or forty thousand to go
if i'm lucky
a lean gray haired man stops his walk
beside the retaining wall
beneath the luxury houses
behind the wintering driving range
where the assistant superintendent lives
with her pink cadillac
to scoop a snowball
i speed off
maybe he wants
to throw it at my chevie
which is as old as my dog
who is older than my mother
or will he wait for a truck
with an open window
we used to snowbomb busses
when we were new york kids
maybe a cop car
sending them searching
white streets for juvenile delinquents
no telling what may happen
when youth strikes old hearts

GENGHIS KHAN

genghis khan
we secretly named him
the anonymous infamous cook
of yankee kitchen restaurant

charges from the grill waving a butcher knife
at customers who complain
while we laugh
and to the last lick of grease
eat our plates clean

— Bill Rodriguez

Madison WI

A MATTER OF POSTURING

i tell you that there are at least
a thousand ways to sit in a hard-
backed chair and you challenge me,
ask me to demonstrate. but how
can i make you understand?

it's not possible, seeing that i'm
only one person and the chair has
become too familiar for objectivity.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

one of my chinese buddies
complains about how hard it is
to get christmas cards in richmond
that are written in chinese.

i tell him that i've never
been able to find one
that does the buddha justice,
though you'd think
it wouldn't be a problem
with that flowing smile
and bowling ball gut of his.

CONTINUING ED

she thinks of me as a bum
because i can't afford
fashionable clothes
and though i should
get a job
i want to go back to school
to get another master's degree