

DONALD ILLICH

*Sketch of an Astronaut*

I've wondered how far a man in a spacesuit  
can go in this little town, shaped for sleepy  
farmers and teens with buckets of turnips,  
who throw them off trucks at crowds of children.  
He has his own source of oxygen, so the smoke  
of Cuban cigars at the lodge or the gray clouds  
over the daily book burnings don't tear up his eyes  
or roll him over into a waiting line of coffins.  
Making so much of his big leaps at hopscotch, he  
plants flags in the housewives' petunias and plays  
golf among the asphalt potholes, disappointed  
the ball skips across lawns and fails to soar.  
When he chaperones the prom with our youngest teacher  
he buzzes his words through the white helmet,  
dwarfs her hands with his insulated gloves, and  
doesn't feel the hot pink lipstick through his visor.  
The neighbors find his boot prints, large steps  
for a man, at two in the morning outside their launch  
pads, where the astronaut creates explosive sounds  
with his mouth inside space cars that won't fire.  
Before he leaves he sits in a chair at the ladies'  
auxiliary, who a week ago drew their first naked man.  
No matter how much they plead the suit stays on.  
Around his massive head they sketch the stars.