

The State · Ken Poyner

You get the windows. I'm driving  
Nails through the door casing, pushing your prize  
Antique chest against the porch door.  
Our son is under his bed, reading  
With his flashlight. Up the street  
The crowd is arguing with a man  
Who leans out of his second story window  
And soon they'll be pulling up his garden.  
Regardless the worth of their rhetoric  
A truck has pulled to the man's stoop  
And quick-eyed youths are loading onto it  
The man's patio furniture. Washerwomen  
Armed with stones stand in the road,  
Weigh angle and arc. Janitors  
With mops and brooms have caught  
A young housewife outdoors and I'm afraid  
The political polemic has come down to tatters  
Of the woman's clothing caught on our fence.  
I understand it's all about education,  
Summer camps, the Skinnerian way our children  
Are raised. I heard one woman screaming  
*How many children will be square roots,*  
*How many decimals, how many quadratics,*  
As she had a young middle-class girl by the hair,  
Dragging her through rosebush after rosebush.  
I share their concern. Our son under his bed  
Laughs every time a rock hits the house.  
Several people in this block worry the problem, worry to lose  
The individual opportunity to turn to different mineral.  
Support for them is so high that no one has called  
The police. Different circumstances and we might  
Be out with the mass, promoting our own  
Rational alternative. A group angrily tugging  
Their children from school I hear  
Broke into a television repair shop, beat the owner  
Half to death, ran off with forty-two  
Television sets. The shutters shut, I sit  
In my own chair, hand dangerously close

To the French phone. Outside day laborers  
Pull the brass numbers from our mailbox,  
Yell that our house is better than any two  
Owned by the workers they know, yell  
That all they want is their children's future.  
I sit quietly with all that I have,  
Wait for them to get into the liquor store three blocks down,  
Grow frenzied a little while more, then subside.