

Barren Precinct · *Bill Knott*

Tightropes cross swayingly from church belfry
to church belfry, in one street a pileup of mattresses
is burning. If it was snowing it would be
like their very first sheets returning,
fresh from the sky's laundry. In the bracingly cold air
I see doorframes with no houses, houses with no rooms, and houses
where they serve lunch in its most naive form. I amble toward
a wood fence, a childishly-chalked bullseye, in which
I find some kind of old military medal pinned dead-center:
the medal has a pale, harmful ribbon; it flutters and rattles
whitely, withstanding the wind,
defending the bullseye's secret, inmost ring.
If cornered, I would agree—with almost no argument—,
this medal should get a medal!

Barren precinct,
eyes stare at you without our even knowing,
like the statue of a buddha
they regard you with immobilized eyes, with
carven idol eyelids,
you are the eternal non-unguent of tearless eyes,
the blink that shall never be.