



## CELESTIAL MECHANICS

Alan Bernheimer

SPINAL GUARD

for Louis Postel

No snow falls from blue sky  
with the effortless slide of the trombone

Besides, the blind drive slow  
with the nonchalance of boys

and uncanny gentleness empties  
the planetarium into the street  
courtesy of Mozart  
who detested the flute

eager, destitute, a/k/a Wolf  
his secret slang the wind

Some spectacular fish for pets  
and afterwards infinite novelty, clinging

Versus three meals a day, knockout drops,  
frankly hopeless downtown fever

RIPOLIN

Wood pins clothes on the line  
particularly now the wind is blowing

so mothballs evaporate a mile or more away  
and frost X-rays car hoods

Who heard music? The grief is brilliant

retinal pulse, virtually asterisks  
on the face of visceral pastimes

For a little while perhaps ten hours  
have passed one after the other

## CARAPACE

The face of a stranger  
is a privilege to see  
each breath a signature  
and the same sunset fifty years later  
though familiarity is an education

who likes what most?

high rounded cornices with baby  
moon hubcaps played by the wind

electricity travels from time  
to time on the surface of these lips

thoroughly tropical pleasure  
forms the customary features  
combination eyeteeth and semaphore

everything I touch turns  
to flesh or vice versa



## VISIBLE MEANS

Here for now a small wonder  
tea's velvet tongue on fluted teeth

nobody's fault prevents the poor  
from being born, with spectators

no wonder foreign objects  
contrary to light  
touch and go numb  
possibly people or plants

half indoors, top half outside  
seeing stars at the edge of insomnia  
and gray apples at dawn

number, uneasy and underfoot  
in some lifelong radio outskirts

## VENTRILOQUY

Splendid  
waking midday drowning or walleyed  
ready to hate

when each eardrum heartbeat fly lines  
down French curves in Mozart Avenue  
to solos birds peel off the sky  
green with its bruises of light

and pillowing high babies  
whose cheeks invent the wind  
that is philosophy to my ears

The altitude of the far  
shore is tremendous  
half reflection and unforeshortened

by surfeit of instant  
like a river of mercury  
run through a lawn of chives

unsung by felicitous memory  
revenging stringy dreams  
unable to tell them apart

THIRD MAN PRESS  
San Francisco 1978

These poems first appeared in Provincetown Poets.