

unrung bells

so say the kids
with cleanest clocks)

(she'd see red
right out of the blue

little pitchers with ears
too big not to box)

(but remember the ones
worse off than you

on the floor still trying
to gather the blocks)

(if your skin still stings
where she lay her hand on you

scattered each time
opportunity knocks)

(don't forget
(how could i forget)
she wouldn't abandon you

another year of dishonesty

daily forced to fake the face of a man still stable at the seams, his dreams are where the stitches split, where he's begun to come apart.

there is a part of him that wants all this: sanity, an even keel, the status that comes from the quotidian. there is honor there.

to tame the chaos carried in our cells, to break the chain that ties us to what crawls on its belly, shits where it sleeps, takes what it wants, wants all it can take.

there is honor in making a living, living within your means, the means to an end, if it gives living meaning.

there is honor in balance. in your diet or your bank account.

rising. shining. shaving...

...raving towards the death of day, his nine to five side slides away. there is a way to break that chain that ties us to the hungry clock, whose heartless hands and angry face want everything that they can take.

blinded by boredom, bullshit bound, what's the fucking worst? he wonders.

friends he's never met move forward. glasses hit the bar like thunder...

...under every other stone: another stone. beneath each stone between: a hole the shape of his expanding body.

at the bottom, two percent thicker than the year before: tiny, tidy bundles of green.

more than he has ever seen. just enough to want a little more...

...lickspittle...

...whore...

...you're the needed piece. the thread that binds the bolt that holds the cog in place.

the mightiest cathedral rises to its steeple stone by stone by stone. and beneath the stone, paid no mind, assembled over centuries and hard pressed to bear the weight of its purpose: the necessary soil.

you are dirt.

out of which the seeds of empires sprout.

to automate, there must be an automaton...

...ultimatum: open eyes, shake off the shadows, steady yourself against the gaggle or get ready for the gutter.

take your place in the procession or stake a place out in the breadline. the headlines back home will be printed red, each exclamation marked: local boy lives up to low expectations! illegitimate fruit rolls back to crooked tree from which it fell! go to work or go to hell...

...so you sell a little soul, ounce by ounce, jot by tittle, until what was once just a little hole is big enough to fall through.

you crawl through the dark while you give all you've got.

wriggle up the ladder. under the fence.

then you're lying in the greener grass. lying with each smile. faking every handshake and morning salutation. pretending you can't feel yourself soften. rot. erode...

add my own vice

the music you must face
the nettle needing grasped
the bullet it behooves you to bite

your life will never mean much
you will never mean much
nothing much will happen
what does will little matter

it will be boring
your dreams will die with you
if they don't die before
or haven't died already

can you learn to live with the empty
infinite and crippling
perpetually perplexed
the odds constant, the sorts always out

you were the reason you were born
what purpose you serve
goes no further
than the fact you choose to serve it

can i handle that

astral rejection

there are days

the ghost goes missing
the ventriloquist quits his post
the organ grinder's hand leaves the crank unturned
the queen deserts her hive

there are days

i am the simplest machine left hollow
a limp dummy grinning in the spotlight without words
a monkey off his leash, hungry for peanuts with no tune to dance to
a mass of drones left to their own device

and i'm thinking

daddy: o the cliché
i never called anyone daddy

you can say it doesn't bother you
because sometimes it doesn't

like everything else
it only hurts when you think about it

my wife is getting rounder
she's got her appetite back

and the baby has ears--he can hear us
floating around in there; so she says

talk to him, daddy
and i'm thinking about it