

## Post Office Discipline

Post Office discipline  
collapses on the rammed earth  
like dominoed bicycles.

One man always watches, paid,  
cleaning his nails.  
Hammer-eyed, he oversees.  
He should purr, shirt cut  
above the rest, but can't.

"I have earned this mask:  
counted humid stamps,  
argued tall customers' hands  
from the countertop;  
suffered the lunch hour  
and the lazy man beneath  
the only fan.  
I worshipped him;  
my wife suffered,  
and I was almost always on time."

The Postmaster's glycerinal  
hairline buttressed  
by fixed forehead wrinkles;  
scaffolding improves the dome.  
Eyes closed, the rasping man  
prevents a migraine. If his  
English improves  
he'll require a new pen,  
perhaps spectacles.

"My assistant will give you  
change for the telephone.  
Is that your bicycle?"

JOEL BAIRD