

Sermon on the day of the circus

Over the city
the bulb went off, flashing
the old men who slicked
their heads with oil.
They were happy when their skulls
possessed their mirrors.

Women who were bedded with clowns
rejoiced
when the sheets took fire,
and those who were able
disappeared in their triangles.

Churchbells rang
all the way down
the melting steeples

The young girls danced
through curbs of flame,
their eyes were kindled pennies

And the fire made tongues
caressing
the courthouse columns.

Young men leaped
like salmon on the highways,
at last unashamed
their shamefast tears
were steaming their faces.

Sirens froze in the heat
when smoke wrapped up the children.
From the pall of stillness
came a tremble of voices.
They sang the blue blessed day,
the rain that was golden.

Now let us all go out
and let us get drunk together.
We have waited so long, lord.
Lord, we have waited so long.

-- John Knoepfle

University City, Missouri