

sandwich and beer  
reading Wormwood  
thinking about Roland  
and Mary Duerksen, about  
Hugh Fox's unpublished book  
on Bukowski, the poem fails;  
but if he says there is  
a girl sitting here  
with a candy cigarette  
in her secret parts  
perhaps interest revives  
and the ground is laid  
for something philosophical.

-- James Tipton

East Lansing, Michigan

### The Closer Sky

My son condensed  
the solar system  
in his head. Squeezing  
space with his hand  
he drew it to scale.

Finding the front  
lawn too small  
he plotted out  
the pasture, placing  
the sun by the creek.

He paced nine  
million miles  
at a stride and stooped  
to fix Mercury  
and Venus in orbit,

altered his line of  
direction to avoid  
whirling the Earth  
near the edge of the manure  
pile by the shed.

He spun Saturn  
at the fence and slid  
through wire  
stepping over  
dust rings,  
and measured and marked  
his meteoric flight  
three billion  
six hundred  
thousand miles

out to Pluto  
then rotated the last  
planet by the road.  
At the edge of the woods  
he stood and studied  
the closer sky.  
Behind the fence  
the cow and I  
blinked our eyes  
in static wonder.