

LINGO

After years and years in machine shops,
machinists begin to talk less and less.
Instead, they begin to
tap their rubber or lead or ball-peen hammers
against their machines,
learning how to play their machines like steel drums.
They walk around with big sheets of sheet metal,
bending and buckling them
until they whirr and hum
like weird high-tech
guitar solos.

They line up cutter holders of varying diameters
and play them like organ pipes
by sticking the tips of their airguns into them
and blasting air through them,
or they blast air against the insides of their closed
fists and create kazoo-like sounds
by rubbing and opening and closing their fingers
and thumbs —

until occasionally, when they are really inspired,
they break out in vocals
to lead their own one-man bands —
the Italians singing opera,
the Mexicans mariachi,
and the bikers
heavy metal.

ETIQUETTE

In the Goodstone Aircraft Company machine shop,
smirks are as omnipresent
as i.d. badges,
as automatic to the machinists
as opening toolboxes
or cleaning the lenses of their safety glasses.
After a few years,
the machinists' faces are twitching with smirks
that have become tics,
until eventually their faces are lined
in the shapes of permanent smirks.
Anyone who doesn't smirk
is either a fool
or what is even worse,
uncorrupted.