

KARL PATTEN

For a Milliner

1

My father lives dying
Slowly in a metal bed.

He wants to be working,
Wants to bend over his table

Or turn to his machine,
Deft fingers sewing together

One last high fashion hat
For a proper Bostonienne.

2

Ten years of paralysis
Have forced his hands

Into his mind—there's nothing
To *do* there. So the horses

Of his childhood snort, ramp,
Rear, break harnesses,

Race flailingly off down
The unpaved streets, and prance

At the seaside, scattering
Sand, green girls, mothers,

And small children fresh
From sepia tintypes.

3

He dies weeping, his mind
Strewn with pins, feathers

And felt, a band of leather,
And the horses running

Like a sewing-machine
That can't be stopped.