

NICK MUSKA

Fork-Lift Poem/Winter

for Lew Welch

When I drive lift

I am saddled to a peeled-paint rhino
who would charge concrete and crumble block
If I did not hold it tightly by the ears.

When I drive lift

I raise three ton with my right hand
and can tilt, spin, drop it
like a plumed lead hat.

When I drive lift

I am the slave of capital, bleeding hydraulic sweat
and oil in airless semi-trailers, blue-toed
froze to the gas pedal, gritty.

When I drive lift

I have a handle on the nuts and bolts of things
pirouetting with iron castings in my jaws
lost without thought.

When I drive lift

From my rhino perch I am lord of all I survey:
An iron-dark, echo-empty warehouse
Ben's junkyard next door, its soil gone oil
sun glinting hard from stacks of rear-view mirrors.

When I drive lift

I am the last snorting thing left out on the dock
breath and exhaust lost in the snowstorm
blowing under the edge of the overhead doors.