

## Transition

A collar weighted with lieutenant's bars  
made this a face to be saluted once  
and possibly despised by one platoon  
I marched ten miles in Norfolk Fahrenheit.  
Close-order-drill made me the martinet  
I tried to tame, but Adam in my blood  
inclined to epaulets until each stance  
and striding flexed my sinews for command.

Soft holsters felt familiar at my hip,  
and bayonets drove easily through groins  
of dummies gallowed for the practice thrusts  
like snakes impaled and twisting on a tine  
to ready me for months of counting cash.  
Released, I paid myself my vouchered sum  
with bills that curved my wallet like a stave  
and drove the pre-paid mileage into days

of typing these in quintuplicate  
and teaching boys the Latin ablative.  
Surrendering my barracked ways meant more  
than wearing out my military socks.  
I kept a wry reservist's look for half  
a year and still keep step with walkers-by,  
although I hate the spectacle of squads

paced to a cadence in a drummed parade.

Between the sweep and sudden cease of grace

I wage today the quiet wars of art

with students calmly primed to probe my views

in lectures I cannot pre-think or plan.

I tell them only what I right now know.

I ask them only what they right now see

and take some triumph from each day's defeat

in my and everybody's war and peace.