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## Barren Precinct

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## Barren Precinct · *Bill Knott*

Tightropes cross swayingly from church belfry  
to church belfry, in one street a pileup of mattresses  
is burning. If it was snowing it would be  
like their very first sheets returning,  
fresh from the sky's laundry. In the bracingly cold air  
I see doorframes with no houses, houses with no rooms, and houses  
where they serve lunch in its most naive form. I amble toward  
a wood fence, a childishly-chalked bullseye, in which  
I find some kind of old military medal pinned dead-center:  
the medal has a pale, harmful ribbon; it flutters and rattles  
whitely, withstanding the wind,  
defending the bullseye's secret, inmost ring.  
If cornered, I would agree—with almost no argument—,  
this medal should get a medal!

Barren precinct,  
eyes stare at you without our even knowing,  
like the statue of a buddha  
they regard you with immobilized eyes, with  
carven idol eyelids,  
you are the eternal non-unguent of tearless eyes,  
the blink that shall never be.