1997

Test Day

John Repp

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Recommended Citation

Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4936

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Test Day

After John unbolted the manifold,
I dropped the brush in the gas, watched him fold
the blueprint, John the Socrates of old

engines—slant-sixes, Ford V-8s, bulbous
Chrysler fan housings, piston rings, green bus
seats by the score. On test day, just us,

no customers. No use. A massacre.
I bolted that sun-blasted shit-acre.
I’d sooner translate the tablets of Ur

than change my own oil. The classicist
I wanted to be burst like a ripe cyst
four years later. My brother asked Was ist?

and I said schlecht in our lifelong attic,
high school German nothing more than a tic
in the face of envy. Larry said ick

for Chaucer’s ich. Richard! Your Baudelaire
spoke French merely, whereas mine built a lair
for me and mine to hide in. Now I want air.