

BILL FEWER

BURN

for David Paterson

Alone in the lonely town.
Children repeat sing song tables.
Fish n chips and burgers squelch
in thick clenching fingers;
truckies and sly travelling rapists
no one suspects.

Alone.
A railway bridge humpbacked under cloud.
A cemetery's pale herd;
willows slump into the river.

Fumbling for cigarettes
I find the letters:
voices gagged in a pocket.
Regret —
a room, candle,
amber rhythm of two bodies.
A truck blusters through
shaking shops, courthouse, pub.
Love — a country radio cliché.

Alone, the children's clumsy scales.
Wind scuffs the garage;
a crushed cigarette pack
drops in the dust.
Restless, thirsting,
a life to burn,
I scan thumb-bruised maps,
decide.

A bowser, greasy gateman pointing escape.
The skid-scorched highway.
The children fading.
Petrol to burn.

KNUTE SKINNER

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY

On pages fourteen twenty and twenty-one
of *The American College Dictionary*
I learned

that zloty is “the gold monetary unit
of Poland
(introduced in 1924)”

that zonda is “the hot, oppressive wind
of the Argentine pampas”

and that Ulrich Zwingli
(1484-1531)
was a Swiss Protestant reformer.

But I did not,
dammit,
learn how to spell *zucchini*.