

Pirate

by John Riley

When I got out I didn't buy
a new suit of clothes, step
into a bar, or bargain
for an hour with a whore.
I walked from McGee Street
over to Russell and wondered
if Bus 16 still went out of its way
to loop around the traffic knot
at the shopping mall. It'd drop you there
if you had need for double knit slacks
or a fake leather coat with snaps
that hid a wide zipper.

I called the old mom to say
I'd be around. She told me
my troubles were over, there
was nowhere to go but home.
Please hurry, she said.
She wanted to hold
my face in her hands.

I turned the corner onto her street.
Tiny houses walked up as I walked down.
I traveled on and remembered
how when I was a boy I'd grow tired
of reading stories about pirates
and drop my book and run outside
to roll down the portside
of Olive Street Hill, climb back up
and try the starboard side,
dreaming the whole time treasures
were coins clinking in my hand,
joy was buying the next round.

