

## Bill Howell / TWO POEMS

### Old Enough to Remember

Millennium bells  
tolling another absolute until it catches up to everyone else.  
Measuring zeroes  
when nobody dressed to the nines  
ever pays enough for what they're trying to leave behind.

Juxtaposed in your own townhouse  
between analog plugs and digital dread, watching consecutive time-zoned capitals  
pretending to blow up  
the sky – all those wide-screen jokers pledging peace  
with all that gunpowder exploding behind them.

Yet here you still are  
at midnight, toasting yourselves  
in the spidery effervescence from outrageous hydrangeas instead of hydrogen  
mushrooms. Actual concussions  
reinforce barrage flashes bouncing

back from towering clouds you can now see better  
than if you were really there.  
Come daylight, perhaps, stray tanks smash up  
your street on their way to  
further festivities ....

## Trailer for Forced Retirement

Something in the sky perhaps  
left over from a hijacked jet.  
Then this lovely silver longing barely moving  
just for a moment in the moonlight.  
And some people choose to hold their tongues  
for their share of the larger silence.

If only the day could stay as blonde as this  
for as long as anybody wants.  
The centrifugal faces of people you used to love  
fling you beyond your long-lost graces.  
So you just don't answer; you're so busy lining up  
your bottom line with your bottom lip.

Silence unravelling  
an artless absence of basics  
no matter what we choose or refuse to share.  
Like the small conversations that stop in any group  
they approach: nothing from before they came  
can soon be remembered. And some

are going to believe whatever they need to believe  
until there's nothing in it for them. Blinks  
washing smashed insects off stain-glass windshields;  
still towing stashed rowboats between  
thirsty thistles and drowning ferns;  
and the sun dancing on the roof of that river.