

TWO POEMS



A. R. Ammons

SPILLS

after bridge work, so many abutments, crowns,
underpasses, cantilevers, my dentist, carried

away into gold and porcelain, regards sternly
flesh and bone that swims underneath,

his structures abstract grins at the soft
permissions of natural law:

these bridges float
over their rivers (time) in flood, the shores

wash, the bridges gaggle about and down the
river they, too, ride, only to be found at

last cool and dry in the ashes someone in
a dwindled morning worries about flushing down

the toilet:

what is pluralism but something not

yet added up: what one wants is pluralism
overwhelmed with unity and unity overwhelmed

with pluralism: overwhelmed:

could each drop

of the stitch be a change of subject or is that
too noticeable: aren't changes of subject

more telling when they jostle in by surprise
and yet is it not a signal writer

and reader can share, a peachy way of saying,
my dear, we have gone on: cracks in the

layering, is that appealing, or not: where
the workman slipped or tragedy found another

venue and view:

I wonder if certain (I mean, uncertain)

questions are proper; for example, does God
exist: well, of course, I rely on faith, but

the only proper answer is, yes: you couldn't
say maybe, where would that put you (or God),

and you couldn't say no, because *then* how could
you account for the presence of things or absence: so,

we, no, you can't ask a question when there are
no choices for answer: I was thinking, tho,

the other day that it may have been comparatively
easy to make things, but it must have been hard

to make nothing, especially if nothing
was already there before: was it some other

kind of nothing or was there this big block of
something that nothing was made inside of or

even that nothing was made of:

adjacencies,

juxtapositions, sprinkles, drifts, plasmic
slurs, smears, addled lines, clusters, how

many shapes clear and at the edge of perceiving,
all these hiding the rhombus, triangle, square,

our clarities drawn into the rondures,
wash-outs: here, I say, I impose the strict,

till an earthwave tumble my tinkerings as
into a river-rush: still, we have held on

well (at least we hold till the visible
from the sky suddenly appear): squiggles,

afterthoughts:

should a tiger come down from

the hills and snarl at the mighty who write
bad verses—senators, presidents, famous

actors—and sell them broadly to the innocent
we little people buying their poverty with

enrichment: meanwhile, we littles wangle and
bangle our tunes, good and bad, to one or two

or none, till we turn out a small person who
beyond all station moves the deep wide into

the cosmic reach:

I'm just an old man in a gelded
cage):

A REGULAR MESS

I took (drove my Toyota) a jug of my one-day's
urine up the road to the Care Center this

morning early, the snow hardly heavier than a
crust of rime, the cushionest grit: this, I

said to the lady, the nurse, all in white,
hair a little creamier, is my creatinine test

results: fill in this form, she said: I sd,
I filled it out yesterday, one like it: well,

she said, fill out another one: then she
picked up my full bottle-jug and said, you are

very generous: she said, some people come in
here with about that much (very little) from

a whole day's effort, you are really generous:
I said, yeah, that's without any beers, too:

I felt proud: but I recalled the doctor had
said, it's not the quantity, it's the quality:

so now I must wait to see if I did a whole lot
of something good or a whole lot of something

bad, perhaps intermediate: I liked her, the
lady in white, a little on the old side but

young enough for me: old people don't see
much age in old people's faces: they see a

young woman in a wreck: so then she came
back from the refrigerator where she stored my

generosity and said, you have to have a blood
test, too, a comprehensive Profile: Jesus, I

said, I just had a egg, ten minutes ago, does
that make any difference: well, well, well,

maybe so: better come in tomorrow morning,
nothing to eat, no coffee, just water: I'll

be here, I said, at seven: if I don't see you
she said, have happy holidays: it was so fine

outside, the sun broken through on the crisp
snow, a good grip for the soles, no other

footprints around, just mine coming in...