

The Heart Is a Can
DARRELL PETSKA

the heart is a can
kicked to and fro,
the archer's mark,
the bullet's prey

dented, skewered,
riddled with holes,
lunacy's invention
owed no patent

patched with tape
as if it could hold
the honeyed brews
we will it to

In Defense
DARRELL PETSKA

Words like
scales on a common carp

beneath words a skin
so soft and vulnerable

even carp bred scaleless
quickly grow back their words

few daring swim defenseless
these perilous seas

silence unexpressed
exposed skin
the road to extinction

(the unscaled head of a carp
a Chinese delicacy)

armor of interlocking
verbs and nouns

picked like flies
from the surface we skim
gasping for breath

Takeaways from a Life Well-Lived
DARRELL PETSKA

A bad dog is hard to find.
Great love requires funfetti frosting.
God can't juggle worth a damn.
Opera is exquisite torture.
The only good cat is a tabby cat.
Poetry is a six-letter word.
Pancakes!
Weather is what it is.
The devil has a pleasing voice.
Free will isn't cheap.
Justice comes in many colors and sizes.
Hope is the best alarm clock.
Wealth is its own knock-knock joke.
Tears, for all their failings, are always wet.
Every cabbage needs a shower.
Life is as long as it is short.
Heaven is in someone's arms.
Only saints know when to stop.
There's always time for one more.
Having the final say leads to heartburn.

Silent Words
DARRELL PETSKA

thou shalt not be silent thou shalt
jam the air with ear-splitting sound
sing and swear belch and fart
blow your horn toot your whistle
crank up KISS to the max
that's not enough you must do more
pipe in crowd noise brass bands
cats wailing on the wall 3 A.M.
provoke your dog squeal your tires
bang two pans together no bang three
it's still lurking that terrible hush
as though your life is a hoax
so shout at it fa la la don't hold back
the sheep in the meadow the cows in the corn
hey-nonny-no way you'll take silence at its word
no way accept that no-voice
that absolutely deafening no-sound
louder go louder go louder still
don't buy a word silence says