

Another Pact

by Charles Harper Webb

You've cowed me long enough, Ezra, with your red
beard and fascist eyes.

I don't need you to teach me *How to Read*.

Tom Sawyer did that years before I'd heard of you.

I skipped the troubadours, that's true;

I was too busy fronting bands for fifteen years.

Your friend Bill Williams swears that, for all your talk
of music, you were tone-deaf.

Ha! The way you threw Greek in my face, I hurl your
tin ear back at you.

Call it *slush* and *slither* if you will—I love Romance.

I don't *go in fear of abstractions*; I love to mix them—
like the concept of gravel—with the concrete.

I love to say, “the Everest of your arrogance.”

Too much *hard imagery* cracks teeth, then (as you
know too well), the head

I'd rather *make it nude*. Or *gnu*.

Shake your puppet-fists all day, Phineas T. Bluster
of poesy—

I still prefer big trout to Dante, Cavalcanti, Bert de

Born, or you.

I prefer Led Zeppelin, and the Minister of Silly Walks.

I prefer to scuba dive.

I've hovered—swaying with key forests, urchins
brandishing black spikes below—

And watched my breath fizz up like soda bubbles
toward the orange mouth of the sun.

I breathe easy at eighty feet, but choke when you start
wheezing in my ear.

I'm just as serious as you.

My first guitar teacher, Mr. Schwartz, had wooden
feet and a personality like hives.

He nettled me until I played scales perfectly, but
feared to improvise.

Thanks for the lessons, Ez, whether I asked or not.

You gave your best. Now I can too.