

[THE SONNET, LIKE POVERTY, TEACHES YOU WHAT YOU CAN DO]

The sonnet, like poverty, teaches you what you can do without. To have, as my mother says, a wish in one hand and shit in another. That was in answer to I wish I had an instamatic camera and a father. Wish in one hand, she said, shit in another. She still says it. When she tells me she wishes I were there to have some of her bean soup she answers herself. Wish in one hand, she says, shit in another. Poverty, like a sonnet, is a good teacher. The kind that raps your knuckles with a ruler but not the kind that throws a dictionary across the room and hits you in the brain with all the words that ever were. Boxed fathers buried deep are still fathers, teacher says. Do without *the*. Without *and*. Without hot dogs in your baked beans. A sonnet is a mother. Every word a silver dollar. Shit in one hand, she says. Wish in another.
