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No Truth But in Things

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No truth but in things

Howard Schaap

I know men who work the fringes of
crowds, aware of clumps of cover and
exits, unshaven, in denim and flannel,
baseball caps pulled low, incognito,
hands in pockets, toothpicks
ground between molars, speaking
stories in pinched off diction, in
jargon and pure land or water
poetry, speaking in

Soilbank, treeline, birddog,
posting a blocker and runnin birds
out the cover from the draw, ditch, slough—
knew they'd be comin out from feedin
in the cornstocks, would bed down in
that reed grass, switch grass, brome grass—
knew that with the weather droppin
down from the northwest they'd
sit tight in the mornin so as
not to damp their feathers
on that drizzle, fresh snow, hoarfrost,
and we'd have to almost
step on 'em to make 'em flush—

speaking in
Breakline, weedline, mudline,
finding fish on the inside turn of the point
on the break between bottom structures,
rockpile, sandbar, mud flat —
he just hammered it first cast, that
chartreuse twister tail, that
red-and-white daredevil, that
fire tiger deep diver, or
he just touched it with his plastic lips—
I'd tipped that ledhead, tube jig, lindy rig,
and he couldn't resist that shiner, redbait, fathead
so I set that hook—felt by the roll and shake
that it was a walleye, small mouth, big pike—

No truth but in
soilbank, birddog, weedline.