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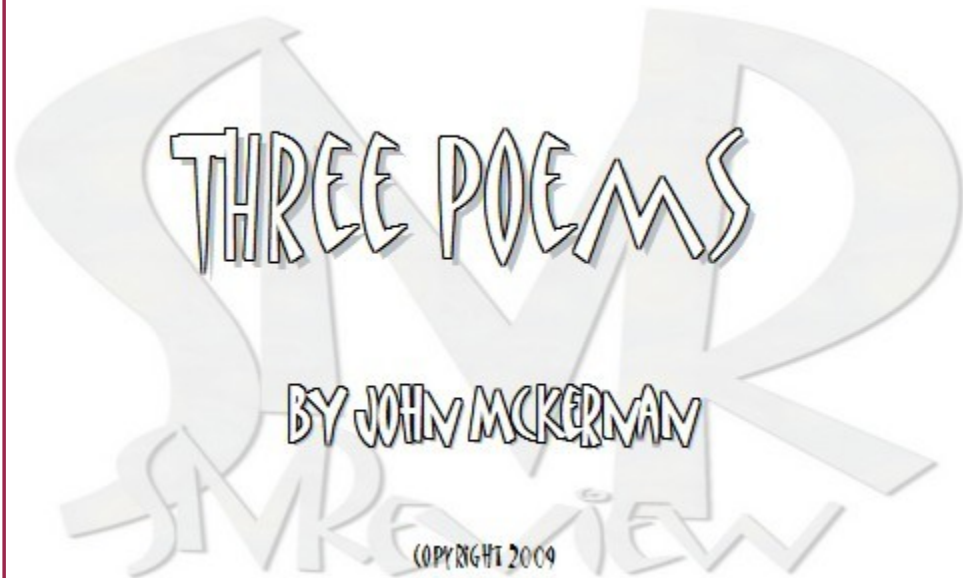
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### **I Want to Taste Formaldehyde**

I want to slaughter Cause by feasting  
On a diet of red and white roses

I want to strangle Effect by weaving  
A rosary of thorns Wearing a thin patch  
Of black rose petals over my left eye

I want to stymie Worm and the Dust  
Brothers with all their Myrmidons  
Those quiet delvers Rot Mold  
Stench Decay Fungi Bacteria

Oh McKernan What will your bravado  
Hatred of Death's indelible ink earn you?  
I want maps of the islands When and Where  
I want to taunt Death so harshly that He's ready  
To drag me from my dirty Omaha grave

& flick me -- in a snap -- to the moon

### **"Your Poem Is Empty and Devoid of Meaning"**

That's what Abe Lincoln told me in his calm voice  
He spoke matter of factly Without rancor

"Much of your stuff is pure fake You might  
Think you are saying something but really  
There's nothing here but vowels and consonants."

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"I like this: Tiny air bubbles in blue  
Stained glass and I like Fear can stitch  
An eyelid tighter than any shadow.  
But what's this crap Night's galactic indifference?"

"I don't rise from the grave very often  
Especially for poets But I like  
Your midwestern daring So when you feel  
Like writing The raindrops kissed enough silence  
Feel this penny and then throw it away."

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## I Don't Feel Like Any Poems Today

I don't want to remember your blonde hair  
Your tall tan body A perfect sculpture

I don't want to remember the jerk I was  
Cramming atoms into every corner  
Of my brain Your voice in Organic lab

I don't want to remember that dark night  
Curved as a flute over all of Nebraska  
Nor the sound of the train's wheels Nor the shrill  
Pointless whistle Nor the moon saying nothing

I don't want to remember how drained  
Of light that laboratory was How for weeks  
Each carbon atom that burned in that room  
Reminded me of your sweet mocking voice  
"Don't you just hate Carbon! Look at this soot!"

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**John McKernan** is a retired comma herder. He lives in West Virginia most of the year -- except for the icicles -- where he edits ABZ Press. His poems have appeared in many magazines including *The Paris Review*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, etc. His most recent book is a selected poems edition called

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*Resurrection of the Dust.*