

BILL HOWELL

LOCAL TRANSPARENCY

My Welsh uncle once got six years
for selling Saran Wrap to the Arapaho.
They used it for preserving treaties.

Fortunately, the authorities had no inkling
about the time machine Uncle Llywelyn kept
under a black fireproof blanket in his barn.

Thus, he was able to deploy his prison address
as a convenient cosmic postal identity box
while he kept rescuing himself from boredom

by omnibussing through the millennia. I suspect
the Arapaho liked him mostly because he didn't
want to be named Chief of anything, especially

after he met my ancient hippie aunt, Open Sky.
Also, thanks to him, people saw through things
much more clearly, and knew what they had.

In-laws, outlaws, all these thundering questions
herd us on to an ageless opaqueness while
the obvious answers disappear in time.

THE BLACK TRAINS

Bombs on squeaky wheels, thoughts
are louder in the dark.
Separating instance from distance, it's far too easy

to forgive what you can't remember.
The odor left hanging
locates motives, permeates its iron-horsed way

with diesel dinosaurs & rented air.
Must have something to do with being old enough
to start stealing from yourself.

But that's what you've been doing all along—
praying instead of doing
something about it. Squealing,

blustering the risk-taking like a rusty politician
running to beat the odds
instead of asking what you're doing

for the common good. Beyond what
the rules allow & beget, there's always what
can be gotten away with.

Can we ever begin to charge enough
for all those tankers
torpedoing through the suburbs?