

TED KOOSER

---

## Auto Salvage

In that muddy junkyard, wrecks were stacked  
like manuscripts, each with some terrible story  
the roads had rejected. We opened them slowly  
and read by the light of our cutting torches,  
breathing the fleshy odor of acetylene,  
peeling the deckled pages back, so many alike:  
a woman's shoe with a snapped-off heel  
crushed up against the firewall, dried blood  
on the cheap seat covers, spatters of brains  
on the dashboard clocks, a few of which,  
somehow still alive on a trickle of current,  
kept somebody's time, whining like flies  
trapped under glass. In the summer air,  
the too-sweet odor of spilled brake fluid,  
the smell of burning paint and molten metal,  
and under my boots, blue puddles of oil  
with twisted rainbows. And from the shop  
maybe fifty yards away, the scanner so loud  
that all those passing on the road could hear it,  
raspy with static, like the forced voice  
of a man with his larynx cut out, desperate,  
trying all day to get someone to listen.