

KEVIN BOYLE

Unruh

for Brian and John

Only today I learned that the street I delivered on—
Unruh, 700, 800, 900 blocks—not a baby, but newspapers—
Means restless in German, *Unruhe*, the paper now deceased,

And *unruhig*, the adjective, described me then—
Restless, uneasy, anxious, unsettled,
Restive, fretful, skittish—and I suppose now, too.

I was a foot-and-wheel, mechanistic part of the labor scene
With my unruly, wide-tired bike and bag brimming with news,
Then, after the papers were folded and tossed, empty, sad sack.

Which city fathers named the road after my state?
And why when the teachers later asked for our own Walden
Did I said Unruh—where I walked in circles, my white bag sash

Blackened with news ink, in all weathers, then doubled back
The next day and the next, Sunday not a day of rest,
But the heaviest load? Although I struggled, anxious, to collect—

Only saying as the door opened, Collecting, hoping for
The 2-cent tips, but getting bathrobes, chewing mouths,
Homes' odors, adult rage at a wet paper poorly placed—

Mostly I was alone, the war in Vietnam at my fingertips
But no closer, the priests in their long scolding robes
Confined to sacristies, the brief lawns I was allowed to step on

Wilder than tar, my intuitions about weather and dogs
Grounded in fact, my feeling that bombs would fall
From grey mouths of planes uncalled for I thought, then I thought again.

KEVIN BOYLE'S book, *A Home for Wayward Girls*, was published by New Issues, his chapbook, *The Lullaby of History*, won the Campbell Poetry Prize, and his poems have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly*, *Hollins Critic*, *Northwest Review*, *Pleiades*, *Poetry East* and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Kevin teaches at Elon University in North Carolina.