

Leather Poem I

Bridle, rein, crupper,
Harness, straps, the various
Saddles—jumping, dressage,
Flat racer with overgirth,
Cavalryman's McClellan,
Ornately carved Western
Embellished with silver conchos,
Lead shank, leash and collar,
Longe whip, buggy whip, horsewhip.

Leather of mule to plow,
Of matched pair to carriage,
Of Doberman to obedience.
Leather of control,
Of animal hide to hide.

Leather Poem II

Stink of the tannery. Putrefaction.
Hides unhaired with urine
From communal pisspots.
Bated with animal brains
And dung collected by children.
Then left to rot
Into suppleness, finery.

The best leather: ostrich, snakeskin,
Bison, alligator, kangaroo for bullwhips,
Sting ray for sword grips.
The valuable slink skins of unborn calves.

Intuit women chewed caribou hides
Until their teeth wore down
To the gumline.

Leather Poem III

Leather proclaims allegiance
To outlawry. Band of Hell's
Angels roaring bar to bar
Looking for trouble. Skid
Into oblivion, leather skinned
By asphalt. Vests softened
With filth like the desire
To hurt, to fill the blood
With revenge like a snake
Shedding its leathers
To resolve a new soul,
Thickening to the callous
Of a glove clenched on a
Handlebar or thudding into
The jaw of the unwary.

Leather Poem IV

Designed for threat or hurt.
Extension of the hand.

Bullwhip of kangaroo skin,
Its intricate braided thong,
Fine wire of the cracker.

Elegant dressage whip
To encourage impulsion,
Side-pass, passage.

Riding crop with a popper
Thwack of insistence,
Trot on.

Jockey's stick flailing
The horse to the wire
Then raised high in triumph.

The quirt. The buggy whip.
Blacksnake of Wyoming
With its heavy shot.