

Ode to the Telephone Booth

John Repp

I'd driven fifteen hours, things broken back there

or refusing to break—not the things with which I'd stocked
the converted carport where I fried rice & cooked coffee,

no—*things*: Love, Work, Money, Innocence (that stubborn
fucker most of all). I was home again, nowhere to stay,
mother dead, father somewhere, brother north, sister deep

in the land of milk & screaming, friends put out of reach
or gone or dead. Across from the dark bungalow
whose every grease spot emitted moan, hum, or whisper
I could sing any time you asked, I carried a dime

into the phone booth outside the Hess station & called someone
I had no right calling anymore. I was filthy, cold & hungry.
I had enough money to turn around & enough will to bed down

in the back seat, but the only word I knew was "Please."
Sometimes, tenderness sleeps at the heart of things. "Sure,"

she said. "Take the couch. You can't make *me* the asshole."