

The Cub and the 404

You know nothing about tractors
except how to check and add oil,
the gasoline, hook up the trailer
by kicking in its rusty joints,
climb the tire to get to the seat,
turn the key, pull the choke, reach
the clutch, hold the start, curse
God when it won't, rejoice Him
when it does, put it in reverse,
ease the clutch, back in a straight line
and forward to the end of the drive,
left down the hill along the fence across
the bridge over the stream on a sharp
turn with inches to spare on each side.
Or, to hook a chain to the tow bar
if this or that chunk of farm needs dragging.
Or that it sometimes takes a boy and an old man
to control an old tractor, and sometimes
it takes two tractors. If one gets stuck
in the mud at the bottom of the pasture,
it takes another to tow it out.
But if one ever got stuck in the stream
you'd have a permanent landscape sculpture
to admire called Old-Ass-Tractor-In-Stream.
You know that when you sell a farm
the tractors go with it, and the guy that buys it
won't know any of this. You know to look away
as you drive by a MacDition slapped
onto a 1710 farmhouse. You know that
when you've got one end of a rope
tied to a dead tree leaning on power lines
and the other end to a tractor,
and you're standing under the tree
holding a chainsaw ready to make the final
cut, because you can guess pretty well



but don't really know which way that tree
is going to fall, you'd better know
which way you're running, not to mention
what you are going to do with the chainsaw,
because as little as you know about tractors,
you know absolutely nothing about chainsaws.

ANDREW BENNETT grew up outside Philadelphia, and lives in Boston with his wife and two daughters. He has taught high school English for twelve years in New York, New Mexico, and Massachusetts. Other poems of his appear in *Verse Wisconsin*, *The Hollins Critic*, and *Rattle*. He studied at Vassar College, Bread Loaf School of English, and Rainier Writers Workshop.

