

EXCERPTS — Free Air, Poems
by Joe Wenke

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I Talk When You Talk

I talk when you talk.
When you're silent,
I'm silent too.
It's what I do.
I can't help myself.
I try,
but it doesn't work.
I can't lie.
We get along just fine
when we're apart.
When I think of you,
it breaks my heart.
I forget.
Why did we ever get together?
I forget.
What was it like to be in love?
I forget.
Then I remember.
At this point
it doesn't matter.
There's nothing
we can do.
I talk when you talk.
When you're silent,
I'm silent too.

Lament of an Old Man

What sadness!
I am at the end
of my life.
I realize this today
for the first time.
It has been with me
all morning.
Even now as I watch
the day settle in,
I know my life
is over.
And to think,
I was just beginning
to get the hang of it.

The Religious Right

The religious right
is so uptight.
They hate on the gay
every day.
Don't they have something else to say
like love thy neighbor
or do not judge?
No matter what
they just won't budge.
A man loves a man.
But that's not part
of God's perfect plan.
That's what they say.
But don't blame them.
God is the one
who's anti-gay.
That's their story.
That's their power
and their glory.
They're not bigots.
They just know that
hate is the ticket
that will get them
through heaven's gate.

I Like to Lie

I like to lie.

I lie a lot.

I lie just to keep in practice.

It might be important,
or it might not.

It's all the same to me.

Lying sets me free —
from my girlfriend,
from my wife,
from my boss,
from my life.

I say whatever suits me,
whatever comes to mind.

I'll be true to you forever.

Yada, yada, yada.

The money's in the bank.

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Lying is my SOP, my MO and my praxis.

The only thing that's better?

Cheating on my taxes.

I Feel Guilty

I feel guilty all the time,
but I've never committed a single crime.
I don't cheat.
I don't steal.
I don't eat
in between meals.
I don't gossip.
I don't slander.
I don't pimp.
I don't pander.
I don't curse.
I don't swear.
I've never done anything
to anybody anywhere.

I was told when I was a kid
that being born was what I did.
That was my one and only crime
at that time.

Then I hit puberty
and wanted to fuck.
That's when my brain
really got stuck.

Wanting to fuck?
That's a crime?
So that's when I started
feeling guilty all the time.

Cool Fool

I'm a cool fool
What's that

I do what I want
I know where it's at

I don't have to think
I know what to do

I go with the flow
I roll with the crew

I don't need to click
I don't need to clack

I don't play the field
I don't watch my back

I don't need to flip
I don't need to flop

I don't need to bip
I don't need to bop

I know what is real
I know what is fake

I know when to boil
I know when to bake

Handyman Special

I'm like an old house.
The roof leaks,
and there's water
in my basement.
The floorboards creak,
and my heater works
intermittently.
The faucets drip.
My insulation's shot,
and there's just the faintest smell
of rot
emanating from my back door.

Some days I feel
like I just can't take it any more.
It seems like everything is on the blink,
but my agent thinks
that with a new coat of paint
I might still have
a little curb appeal.
After all I'm arguably
one of the better houses
on the street,
and there's always somebody
out there who might do a deal.