

## *Two Poems*

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### *Days at the Races*

Either he's dead or my watch has stopped.

—Groucho Marx

Away they go, with their outlandish names,  
saddled with human baggage, desperate wagers—  
enough to make a thoroughbred go lame,  
be it a strapping colt or sly old stager.  
Away they go, with Monday in the lead,  
and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday gaining speed.  
Friday and Saturday, poor things, are off the bridle,  
while Sunday, bless its heart, is simply idle.  
Some like to be there—tremble at the crack  
of every whip, eat dust, bathe in the lather  
and feel the press of flesh. Me? I would rather  
keep my distance, make my bets off-track.  
Each week I pony up a little dough,  
although I seldom win, or place, or even show.

*Dictionary of Omissions*

The chief shortcoming of the *Dictionary* is, paradoxically, that it is so good that one wishes it were larger.

—*Modern Language Review*

The atlas of my sunken continents,  
 the empty bowl I used to keep my fish in,  
 the shoebox of expired pawn tickets,  
 and this, my *Dictionary of Omissions*.  
 Words I'd withheld like an obsessive hoarder  
 have been arrayed in alphabetic order  
 by some unsparing lexicographer.  
 Forever at a loss, I now refer  
 to brave objections that I should have made,  
 to simple kindnesses never extended,  
 conclusions left obscenely open-ended,  
 heartrending breaks faintheartedly delayed.  
 The supplements arrive, set after set—  
 perpetual addenda of regret.