TO ALEXANDER ZHOLKOVSKY, IN EXILE IN LOS ANGELES

Pre-post-structuralist Alik

wheels away from USC in

the morn, his sandals meld

with the pedals, this street

rolls his bicycle, steel shines on spokes.

Bearded Alik, in search of nude beaches.

Down to the sea, except it's not down

but straight, the hills in the distance

already hazy in the purple-brown

translucence of photochemical smog.

The sun is warm on his back, dyeing

away Ithaca winters. Alik

in unrainy Southern California

and he doesn't drive.

Cycle on, Pasternakian friend.

Cycle on, Alik, only thirty miles to the nearest beach.

They say the sands of Venice are pearly

and auburn girls crowd fabled Malibu.

If you long to see the surf of sainted Monica

do not be deterred, Alik

by the tar pits of La Brea

the muffler shops of Sepulveda Blvd.

Stop at the Church of the Spirit of Holy Monetarism,

detour for a semiotic analysis of El Segundo's

taco shop signs.

There is no Penelope waiting at home...

Oh, Alik, have the Angeleno lotus-eaters

sated you with their buckthorn weed?

Buy yourself some chaps, with deerskin

fringes to blow in the wind as you ride, and

come home, Alik.