

Too Cool For School

To hear him talk you'd think that
at fourteen he knows everything
you could ever teach him.
If not for one catch
you'd write him off as a type,
like the immature kid
or the hyperactive kid,
but the catch is that
you know another guy, about seventy,
who also has an answer for everything
and also delivers his opinions as facts.
Listening to the old guy,
you can't help but think
how much of what's
fresh and unpredictable about life
he has missed,
and how one thing
you could tell the kid
that he couldn't claim to know already
is what a sabotage of experience
his seen-it-all pose will prove to be,
and how ignorant,
which is of course the one thing
he's desperate to think
and to have everyone say
he's not. Besides,
there's an inquisitive,
programmed-to-be-
constantly-astonished girl in your class
who's smarter than he is
thanks to those very qualities,
the kind the old guy has bypassed many times
like exits off the stupid highway,
his certainty a straight road past ramps
leading to the precipice of doubt.