

Work Poetry / Poésie de Travail

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[See table of contents](#)

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WORK POETRY/ POÉSIE DE TRAVAIL

Keep Going

“the old shear man speaks:
during the war a power outage wouldn't stop them
they worked on by candlelight
riveting ships bound for atlantic convoys”

— David Conn

the booking office late at night
between surgeries I have time
to type out David's poems for the publisher

the guy on the phone is rounding up relief nurses
Anne it's me. Would you like to work evening on 3 North?
Bill, can you work double shift tomorrow? Thanks,
I knew you'd be overjoyed.

Hospitals always have emergency generators
when the power went off at the General, the lights flicked on again
within two or three seconds
somehow we are really afraid of hospitals without electricity
the show must go on.
it isn't a bit romantic to operate by candlelight
the swinging kerosene lantern shining into the wound? No sir

The continuous crews of wartime factories
have nothing on us: the OR runs all night
blocked grafts, pacemakers, incomplete miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy
fractured legs and skulls, Caesarean section, 2 a.m. knife wounds
one after the other carried in past silently mopping cleanup crews

On my shift too I drive hundreds of fine silk rivets
into tubby hulls
bound only for the battles
of lower Granville Street

K.B. Emmott

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