

Translated from the Austrian (Which I Can Now Understand)

I'm climbing the stairs, / turning left at right angles. I see dark / clothing and cold eyes
staring— / the portraits on the wall. / When I reach the top, / I feel exhausted but / the
landing's there, / only a few stories down. As I enter the room, / I hear his voice. It's the tour
guide / of this fifteenth century castle. Carefully / he confirms that I am in fact / seeing a
toilet at the center of the room. The voice bids me to begin— / I am to deposit everything / I
brought with me. / There's splashing, as I mechanically start: / the marbles from my
grandfather / drop in one at a time, / smoothly, no plop, just ripples / that lap the sides of
the bowl. / My 1992 complete set / of baseball cards goes next, / followed by the dead-eyed
portrait from the wall, / so that it won't stare at me / on the stairs again. / My eyes widen /
as the tastefully bound copy of Moby Dick / ploughs toward the water, bow first. / I'm
starting to make a mess, / so I dunk the Austrian tour guide, / who protests alternately /
with his native language and passable French, / while I jam him down / with my fist. / It
must be loud, / though I can't hear him at all / and only see his lips mouthing / the words of
this poem.