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# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

- John Charles Ryan (Australia)

My father gave me a robot  
except he pronounced it *row-butt*;  
I thought, *how does someone row a butt?*

That was his northern New Jersey accent—  
the *abb* becoming *ubh*, the *ubh* becoming *argh*,  
the millions of miles driving to the oil refinery  
each day uttering its curse;

It wasn't Christmas, wasn't my birthday,  
but he gave it to me regardless,  
though my mother warned impromptu gifts  
could turn a son into a rotten brat—  
a Jersey *Boy*, a Jersey *Bot*, a Jersey *Butthead*.

I placed the bot on the TV,  
atop the pea-green rug,

atop the concrete slab,  
atop the sandy stratum,  
atop the aquifer that fed the well—  
a miniature R2-D2,  
blue bands over silver dome  
arms that went up or down, only.

When the dog got hold of it, chewed it,  
tore the head off—those R2-D2 eyes went blank  
as a bird's after impacting a window,  
chewed up like a shoulder bone,  
ragged tooth prints dripping saliva.

I snatched it from the dog's hot wet mouth,  
put it in the corner of my room, where  
it would eerily stare back, head detached—  
the misplaced desires of man, bot, beast.

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