Counting

Have you ever had a friend who
Is compelled to count things? So
Much so that it seems a bit off,
Weird. Not Rainman strange.
Perhaps, sunny-day-drizzle odd.
Somewhere on a spectrum that
Paradoxically ends with infinity.

Now, we know our days are numbered.
We all think nothing of counting them,
One to thirty-one or thirty, with one
Aberration of twenty-eight or twenty-nine.
These are things that count--days, nights.
But then there is everything else, which,
Evidently, must therefore also be counted.
These friends they cannot help themselves.
In a flash, he or she will tabulate traffic lights,
Light posts, mailboxes, trees, the things
That pass. How many times they have done
Whatever it is. It all adds up. But does it?

Part of the equation is that they must report
To me the sum of their observation as if I am
The tallyman. It does not matter that I do not
Care. It does not matter that it does not matter.
I am aware that it provides some small comfort
Somewhere on the scale of small comforts.
It does not matter that I tell them I do not care.
They take care to continue to accept the measure
Of their world. I can count on it. But they will
Not, funny this, take into account how many times
I tell them I do not care. In this, I do not count.

Sharpening

So, now I hold it
With its hand heft
Which is necessary
To grip it fast so
It cannot slip
As I draw the blades
Of recall through it
With backward motion
The drag of friction
Cutting through the warp
Of memory when

An itinerant sharpener
Would drive through
The neighborhood
His tinker's bell jingling
A signal to assemble
Knives and scissors
To let his steady hand
Press on stone or wheel
To make sharp again
What another hand had
Dutifully dulled

Like Bats Outta Hell

The fire licked the andiron, savoring
The hardwood log it consumed.
Hardly hellfire, but we were entranced,
Mesmerized as if we had been consigned.

The morning after, the ash has cooled
So the bats return to their chimney
Haunt, shoot out the sooted brick maw
Like balls being served by a machine

Set at slow distinct interval. I
Take up my tennis racquet, as tightly
Strung as I in the moment, and begin
To practice my vaunted forehand

And overhead, no topspin, just a splat.
Game, set, match, and that was that.