Having intended to merely pick on
an oil company, the poem goes awry

Bob Hicok

Never before have I so resembled British Petroleum.
They—it?—are concerned about the environment.
I—it?—am concerned about the environment.
They—him?—convey their concern through commercials,
in which a man talks softly about the importance
of the Earth. I—doodad?—convey my concern
through poems, in which my fingers type softly
about the importance of the Earth. They—oligarchs?—
have painted their slogans green. I—ineffectual
left-leaning emotional black-hole of a self-semaphore?—
recycle. Isn’t a corporation technically a person
and responsible? Aren’t I technically a person
and responsible? In a legal sense, in a regal sense,
if romanticism holds sway? To give you a feel
for how soft his voice is, imagine a kitty
that eats only felt wearing a sable coat on a bed
of dandelion fluff under sheets of the foreskins
of seraphim, that’s how soothingly they want to drill
in Alaska, in your head, just in case. And let’s be honest,
we mostly want them to, we mostly want to get to the bank
by two so we can get out of town by three and beat
the traffic, traffic is murder, this time of year.
How far would you walk for bread? For the flour
to make bread? A yard, a mile, a year, a life?
Now you ask me, when are you going to fix your bike
and ride it to work? Past the plain horses
and spotted cows and the spotted horses and plain cows,
along the river, to the left of the fallen-down barn
and the right of the falling-down barn, up the hill,
through the Pentecostal bend and past the Methodist
edifice, through the speed trap, beside the art gallery
and cigar shop, past the tattoo parlor and the bar
and the other bar and the other other bar and the other
other other bar and the bar that closed, where I swear,
al-anon meets, since I’m wondering, what is the value
of the wick or wire of soul, be it emotional
or notional, now that oceans are wheezing to a stop?