

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

TOCA EL PIANO BORRACHO
COMO UN INSTRUMENTO DE PERCUSIÓN
HASTA QUE LOS DEDOS TE EMPIECEN A
SANGRAR UN POCO



TOCA EL PIANO BORRACHO
COMO UN INSTRUMENTO DE PERCUSIÓN
HASTA QUE LOS DEDOS TE EMPIECEN A SANGRAR
UN POCO

Charles Bukowski

Traducción:

Eduardo Espinoza Lecca, María García

Revisión de traducción:

Eric Leunam

Dibujos de tapa y contratapa:

Fernando Laguna Silva

Título en inglés:

Play the Piano Drunk Like a Percussion Instrument Until The Fingers Begin To Bleed a Bit
(Black Sparrow Press, 1979)

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Responsable de esta edición:

hantz polilla

Esta versión en español, gratuita y distribuida electrónicamente, se empezó a construir el 2005, en una calle cualquiera del Centro del Lima (Perú) a iniciativa de hantz polilla. La traducción la empezó Eduardo Espinoza Lecca, luego María García (Mendoza, Argentina) y las versiones que se presentan fueron revisadas por Eric Leunam (México).

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Agradecemos a las siguientes revistas que publicaron originalmente algunos de estos poemas: *Blitz*, *The Goodly Company*, *Hearse*, *Midwest*, *Ontario Review*, *The Other*, *Target and Wormwood Review*. Gracias también a *Capra Press* que publicó algunos de estos poemas en un librito titulado *Fire Station*.

nota introductoria / justificación / invitación

"Lo peor de todo es que algún tiempo después de mi muerte se me va a descubrir de verdad. Todos los que me tenían miedo o me odiaban cuando estaba vivo abrazarán de repente mi memoria. Mis palabras estarán en todas partes. Se crearan clubs sociales y sociedades. Será como para volverse loco. Se hará una película de mi vida. Me pintarán mucho más valiente de lo que soy y con mucho más talento del que tengo. Mucho más. Será como para hacer vomitar a los dioses. La especie humana lo exagera todo: a sus héroes, a sus enemigos, su importancia."

Charles Bukowski

En España se vienen editando los libros de poesía de Bukowski que luego llegan a los países Sudamericanos, por no decir atrasados tercermundistas (Perú entre ellos) a un precio sumamente exagerado. Y ni qué hablar de los libros editados en Argentina, México y Chile que ni siquiera aparecen por las librerías. Libros como¹:

☞ *20 poemas* (España)

(Mondadori, 1998)

☞ *Poemas de la Última Noche de la Tierra*.² (España)

(Dvd, 2004)

☞ *Lo más Importante es Saber Atravesar el Fuego*.³ (España)

(La Poesía, señor Hidalgo, 2002)

☞ *Escrutaba la Locura en Busca de la Palabra, el Verso, la Ruta*⁴ (España)

(Visor, 2005)

¹ En los casos que no se indique se trata sólo de antologías.

² Poemas completos del libro *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* (Black Sparrow Press, 1992)

³ Poemas completos del libro *What Matters Most is How Well you Walk Through the Fire* (Black Sparrow Press, 1999).

⁴ Poemas completos del libro *Sifting Through the Madness for the Word, the Line, the Way* (Ecco, 2003)

- ☞ *Arder en el agua, ahogarse en el fuego*⁵ (España)
(La Poesía, Señor Hildago, 2006)
- ☞ *El Infierno es un Lugar Solitario* (España)
(Txalaparta, 1997)
- ☞ *100 Poemas.* (Argentina)
(Empybeercan ediciones, 1993)
- ☞ *Poemas I.* (Argentina)
(Editora AC, 1995)
- ☞ *Poemas II.* (Argentina)
(Editora AC, 1995)
- ☞ *Cartas y Poemas.* (Argentina)
(Colección del Diario Página –Nº 102–, 1996)
- ☞ *El Amor es un Perro Infernal.*⁶ (México)
(Milenio de México, 1999)
- ☞ *Soy la Orilla de un Vaso que Corta, soy Sangre.* (México)
(UAEM, 1983)
- ☞ *El Mundo Visto desde una Ventana del 3ª Piso.*⁷ (México)
(Hombre que Lee, 2001)
- ☞ *Una de las más Ardientes y Otros Poemas.* (México)
(Ediciones Laberinto, 2004)
- ☞ *Poemas del Viejo Indecente.* (México)
(Ediciones Angelito Editor)
- ☞ *La Muerte se está Fumando mis Cigarrillos.* (Chile)
(Bajo el Volcán, 1996)

son de distribución local, y aquellos editados en España (para variar) se venden por estos lugares a un costo muy elevado (y dicen que en España se le rinde mucho culto a Bukowski, y debe ser cierto: Culto = Lucro). Por otro lado, *Anagrama* se ha

⁵ Poemas completos del libro *Burning in Water Drowning in Flame*. Selected Poems 1955-1973 (Black Sparrow Press, 1974)

⁶ Selección de poemas del libro *Love is a Dog from Hell* (Black Sparrow Press, 1977).

⁷ Selección de poemas del libro *Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame* (Black Sparrow Press, 1974)

especializado en la publicación en prosa y salvo *Peleando a la Contra* no ha publicado poemas de Bukowski. En este sentido nos vimos obligados a traducir y publicar clandestinamente, es decir en ediciones no legales cuyo tiraje no sobrepasó jamás los 500 ejemplares, ediciones familiares, manufacturadas, teóricamente no venales, aparecidas bajo el sello *Aguafuerte* ya el 2004, ya el 2005:

☞ *Bailando con la Muerte*⁸

☞ *El amor es un perro del infierno and other poems*

Ambos libros agotados actualmente. En caso del último sólo se tiraron 220 ejemplares.

La traducción del presente se empezó a mediados del 2005 y se arrastró hasta ahora, 2007. Con esta publicación electrónica y gratuita invitamos a todos aquellos que tengan la opción de distribuir libros de Bukowski a hacer lo mismo. Nuestros amigos españoles, basándose en la siguiente premisa: “los muertos no necesitan royalties”, han escaneado los libros en prosa traducidos ya y los han puesto a libre disposición vía internet. Nosotros, tercermundistas y todo, presentamos aquí por PRIMERA VEZ un libro totalmente inédito y completo para disfrute de todos aquellos que se interesen en el viejo Bukowski.

Esperamos que esta intrepidez incite a la expansión, y pronto se tengan a disposición no sólo los libros ya traducidos en prosa (cosa bastante fácil en caso de los editados por *Anagrama*) sino los libros antes mencionados, cuya posesión es, ahora lo podemos decir, un lujo.

Entonces, para empezar el lujo, les regalamos estas traducciones.

hantz polilla

⁸ Antología inédita. Miscelánea de varios de sus trabajos: relatos, cartas, entrevistas, poemas, homenajes, artículos, dibujos, entre otras cosas. Apareció como homenaje a 10 años de su fallecimiento.

TOCA EL PIANO BORRACHO
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UN POCO

Charles Bukowski

a Linda Lee, la mejor

esperando
en una vida llena de pequeñas historias
la llegada de la muerte

dura compañía

poemas como pistoleros
se sientan allí y
hacen agujeros en mis ventanas
mastican mi papel higiénico
leen los resultados de las carreras
descuelgan el teléfono.

poemas como pistoleros
me preguntan
a qué demonios juego,
y si
me gustaría
acabar con un disparo.

tranquilo, digo
la carrera no es
para el rápido.

el poema sentado al
extremo sur del sofá
dibuja
y dice
¡al diablo con esto!

tranquilo, compañero, tengo
planes para
ti.

¿planes, eh? ¿Qué
planes?

El New Yorker,

amigo.

entonces pone su hierro
lejos.

el poema sentado en la
silla al lado de la puerta
se estira
me mira:
sabes, panzón, has
estado muy lento
últimamente

a la mierda,
digo,
¿quién es el que juega
este juego?

todos corremos
esta carrera dicen
los pistoleros
dibujando hierro:
consíguelo

así que
aquí
estás:

este poema
era el que
estaba en
lo alto del
refrigerador
destapando
cervezas.

y ahora
lo tengo
fuera del camino
y todos los demás
sentados por allí apuntando
sus armas hacia mí
diciendo:

¡soy el próximo, soy el próximo, soy
el próximo!

supongo que cuando muera
los que queden
saltarán sobre otro
pobre

hijo de puta.

24-12-78

chupo de esta cerveza
en mi cocina
y pienso en
limpiarme las uñas
y afeitarme
mientras escucho
música clásica
en la estación de radio.
ponen música
festiva.
prefiero escuchar música
navideña en julio
mientras una mujer
me amenaza
de muerte.
ahí es
cuando la necesito.
ahí es
cuando necesito
a Bing Crosby y los
duendes y
algún reno
veloz.

ahora me siento aquí
a escuchar esto de
moda —es como un
dulce—
preferiría jugar
ping-pong con
el fantasma en pena

de Hitler.

los borrachos aficionados chocan sus coloridos
autos unos contra otros
las ambulancias se cantan unas a otras
afuera.

un ideal

Waxmans, dijo,
el hombre se moría de hambre antes,
ahora todas las constructoras lo
desean;
ha trabajado en París en Londres e
incluso en África,
tiene su propio
concepto del
diseño...

¡qué jodido!, dije,
¿un arquitecto muerto de hambre,
eh?

si, sí, se moría de hambre y también su
esposa y sus hijos
pero él era fiel a
sus ideales.

¿un arquitecto muerto de hambre,
eh?

sí, pero finalmente lo logró,
lo vi el miércoles pasado junto
a su esposa, los Waxmans...
¿te gustaría
conocerlos?

dile, le dije, que se meta 3 dedos en
el culo
y los agite.

siempre eres tan desagradable, dijo ella
arrojando su vaso
con escoses y
agua.

sí, dije, en honor
de los muertos.

pisando madera

hay 4 ó 5 tipos en el
bar del hipódromo.

hay un espejo detrás del
bar.

los reflejos no son
buenos.

de ninguno de los 4 ó 5 tipos de la
barra.

hay muchas botellas.

pedimos diferentes tragos.

hay un espejo detrás del
bar.

los reflejos no son
buenos.

"no se requieren sesos para ganar
en los caballos, sólo se requiere dinero
y estómago".

nuestros reflejos no son
buenos.

las nubes afuera.

el sol afuera.

los caballos calentando afuera.

permanecemos en el
bar.

"he apostado a las carreras por
40 años y sigo sin
ganar".

"podría apostarle a los caballos por otros
40 años y seguiría sin
ganar".

al barman no le
gustamos,
el timbre de los 5 minutos
suena.

acabamos nuestras bebidas y
nos dirigimos a hacer nuestras
apuestas.

nuestros reflejos lucen mejor
mientras caminamos:
no se ven nuestros
rostros.

4 ó 5 tipos salen del bar del
hipódromo.

qué mierda. nadie
gana. pregúntale al
César.

las almas de animales muertos

después del matadero
doblando la esquina, había
una cantina
donde me sentaba y veía caer el sol
a través de la ventana,
una ventana que daba a un lote
lleno de hierbas altas y secas.

nunca me daba un duchazo con los muchachos
en la fábrica
después de trabajar
así que olía a sudor y
sangre.
el olor a sudor disminuye después
de un rato
pero el olor a sangre empieza a fulminar
y ganar fuerza.

fumaba cigarrillos y tomaba cerveza
hasta que me sentía lo suficientemente bien
como para subirme al bus
con las almas de todos los animales muertos
que viajaban conmigo;
las cabezas volteaban discretamente
las mujeres se levantaban y se alejaban
de mí.

cuando bajaba del bus
sólo tenía que caminar una cuadra
y subir una escalera para llegar
a mi cuarto donde prendería la radio
y encendería un cigarro

y a nadie le importaba más nada
de mí.

El porsche rojo

se siente bien
ser llevado en un porsche
rojo
por una mujer con
mejores lecturas que
yo.

se siente bien
ser llevado en un porsche
rojo
por una mujer que puede explicarme
cosas acerca
de la música
clásica.

se siente bien
ser llevado en un porsche
rojo
por una mujer que compra
cosas para mi refrigerador
y mi
cocina:
cerezas, ciruelas, lechuga, apio,
cebollas,
huevos, bollos, ajíes,
azúcar rubia,
condimentos italianos, orégano,
vinagre blanco, aceite de oliva
y rábanos
rojos.

me gusta ser llevado
en un porsche rojo

mientras fumo cigarrillos con
una tranquilidad apacible.

Soy afortunado. Siempre lo
he sido:
aún cuando estaba muriendo de hambre
las bandas tocaban para mi.
el porsche y ella
son muy agradables.
Y he aprendido a sentirme bien cuando
me siento bien.

es mejor ser llevado en un
porsche rojo
que tener
uno. la suerte del tonto es
sagrada.

40.000 moscas

separados por una tormenta pasajera
nos juntamos nuevamente

revisamos las paredes los techos buscando fisuras
y las eternas arañas

me pregunto si habrá una mujer más

ahora
40.000 moscas recorren los brazos
de mi alma
cantando:
"I met a million dollar baby in a
5 and 10 cent store"

¿brazos de mi alma?
¿moscas?
¿cantando?

¿qué clase de mierda es ésta?

es tan fácil ser un poeta
y tan difícil ser
un hombre.

lo más extraño

estaba sentado en una silla
en la oscuridad
cuando horribles sonidos de tortura
y miedo
empezaron en la maleza
afuera de mi ventana.
obviamente no era un gato
y una gata
sino un gato y otro gato
y por el sonido
aparentemente uno era mucho más grande
y estaba atacando a
matar.
luego paró.

después empezó de nuevo
y peor esta vez;
los sonidos eran tan terribles
que era incapaz de
moverme.

entonces el sonido cesó.

me paré de mi silla
fui a la cama y
dormí.

tuve un sueño. el pequeño gato blanco y gris
llegaba a mí en mi sueño
y se veía muy
triste. me hablaba,
decía:

“mira lo que el otro gato me hizo”.
y se acomodaba en mi regazo
y veía los rasguños y
la carne viva. luego
saltaba abajo.

y eso fue todo.

me levanté a las 8:45 p.m.
me vestí y salí
y miré alrededor.

no había
nada.

caminé de regreso y
puse dos huevos
en una olla con agua
y encendí la
llama.

el periódico en el piso

...el dibujo es pobre y sé poco del tema:

un hombre de rostro sereno, cara de haber ganado el mundo
y con la corbata del respetable y una pipa satisfecha; y su esposa
notoria por el tinte de su cabello negro (nunca tan
despeinada como para tener bebés y guiarlos a salvo
de las caídas): hay una abuela que se sienta como se sentaría una

[maceta: un espacio ganado pero inútilmente;

y una pareja de sonrientes mocosos falderos

dos pequeños Jung y Adlers

llenos de dudas, preguntas oscuras,

y, por supuesto,

una joven metida en jóvenes amoríos

(ellas toman esto con mucha más seriedad que los

jóvenes que

van detrás del establo);

y hay un joven,-su, creo, hermano quien es experto en establos

con esta gran tundra, este escudo de pelo negro;

está horriblemente saludable

y vestido con lo último en camisas deportivas

con los mejores gestos de experto;

este gran... hermano (¿16? ¿17? ¿18? ¿Dios qué?)

usualmente (cuando leo esto, lo cual es raro)

inclinándose hacia delante sobre el asiento del carro

(se sienta atrás, como el autor)

y hace un... comentario sobre la VIDA, todas mayúsculas, VIDA

[que es TAN cierto

que simplemente... molesta a todos

excepto a los pobres chicos que no saben qué demonios es todo

[esto a pesar de su Jung y Adler

y simplemente van por el camino con los ojos bien abiertos y sus

[chupetines se estiran hasta las puras y bellas nubes;

pero, ¡jepa!, el líder hace añicos su pipa con cara de cerdo burócrata contra
esta verdad que los viejos dejan
tirada como la tapa de un medidor de gas cubierta por la maleza;
[y la madre (¿esposa qué?) baja
una grande y negra ceja y una hebra de pelo más permanece
desprendida en la fría y larga lucha; y la
abuela, oh, no sé
para entonces miro a otro lado; pero recuerdo a la chica,
la muchacha enroscada en amores juveniles,
siempre molesta
porque se la ha culpado de lo de atrás del granero...
encerrada con René el Francés, un embrollo... ¿era pintor o
qué?
nadie quiere encarar esto pero... el gordo... personaje de la
camisa deportiva (quien es un chico bueno y fuerte que estará
[realmente bien algún día) sigue trayendo a la vaca
desde atrás del granero
con el toro; pero es joven
y ríe
y todo se soporta de algún modo;
pero lo mejor es su... explicación de todo,
de la vaca y del toro,
con la inherente e instintiva... sabiduría de su
juventud;
la explicación usualmente llega en la mañana
sobre la mesa del desayuno
antes de que todo este enfermizo amasijo de vulgar... humanidad haya
[tenido la oportunidad
de sentarse en su sitio
el saludable rostro... blanco ríe y lo dice todo;
está allí sentado esperando decirlo todo,
está allí sentado con los pequeños... gemelos (¿o qué?)
mientras derraman cereales tan delicadamente
con sus pequeñas cucharas,
este feliz y gran... patán que nunca tuvo un dolor de muelas

se ha sentado esperando el ingreso de los mayores
—Abuelita que debe ponerse sus dientes, y Papá que está
preocupado por el trabajo, y Mamá que no está
aún de una sola pieza que digamos; y la joven que ama con fe, amargura y...
pureza— ellos entran
y él saca un brazo
inclinando su saludable... esqueleto locamente hacia atrás en la silla
frente a las cortinas estampadas con soles perfectos
y el pequeño adorable, el chapucero conjunto,
dice su gran dicho,
y en el globo sobre su cabeza están las palabras
y por la retorcida agonía de los rostros
estoy dado a creer que algo se ha dicho,
pero leo otra vez
mirando cautelosamente en el gran vómito feliz del rostro
del patán
la gran profundidad marrón de los ojos
y los dientes de la joven botan acidez como si hubiera
mordido una verdad ácida,
pero hay algo mal
hay algún error
porque el pedazo de papel que sostengo
realiza pendientes y ángulos en la luz eléctrica
en el abierto vértigo de mi bóveda
y se acurruca y se enrolla formando un nudo hinchado
y empuja tras mis ojos
y empuja mis nervios ciáticos a la línea de los cabellos
y luego sé que
el gran vomitivo patán no ha dicho
nada nada nada nada nada nada nada
nada nada nada nada nada nada nada
nada nada nada nada nada nada nada
y ahora,
en la alfombra
bajo la silla

puedo ver la sección cómica
doblada en dos,
puedo ver las líneas blancas y negras
y unos rostros que no me molesto en distinguir;
pero una débil enfermedad me vence
al ver este pedazo de papel
y desvío la mirada
y trato de no pensar
que mucho de nuestra vida
se parece a la de los rostros del periódico
que miran desde los pies
y sonríen y saltan y gesticulan,
para confundirse con la basura de mañana
y ser desechados.

dos moscas

las moscas son furiosos pedacitos de
vida;
¿por qué están tan furiosas?
parece que quisieran más,
parece casi como si estuvieran furiosas
por ser moscas;
no es mi culpa;
me siento en la habitación
con ellas
y me joden con su agonía;
es como si fueran pedazos de alma
abandonados en algún lugar;
intento leer un diario
pero no piensan dejarme en paz;
una parece subir en semicírculos
por la pared,
emitiendo un miserable sonido
sobre mi cabeza;
la otra, la más chica,
se queda cerca y me molesta en la mano,
sin decir nada,
elevándose, cayendo,
volviendo a trepar;
¿qué Dios puso estas
extraviadas cosas sobre mí?
otros hombres sufren dictaduras,
amores trágicos...
yo sufro insectos...
espanto a la más chica
y eso sólo le hace revivir
su impulso desafiante:
da vueltas más rápido,

más cerca, incluso hace
un sonido de mosca,
y la otra arriba
intenta un nuevo vuelo
excitada, también,
se apura,
cae de repente
en un golpe de ruido
y se juntan
dando vueltas en mi mano, rozando la base
del portalámparas
hasta que alguna cosa humana en mí
no aguanta más sacrilegio
y empiezo a golpear
con el diario enrollado
—¡fallé!—
golpeo,
golpeo,
se interrumpe la armonía,
algún mensaje se perdió entre ellas,
agarro a la más grande primero,
cae de espaldas
agitando las patitas
como una puta furiosa,
y le pego de nuevo
con mi palo de papel
y se convierte en una fea
mancha de mosca;
la chiquita vuela más alto
ahora, tranquila y rápida,
casi invisible;
ya no se acerca a mi mano;
está mansa e inaccesible;
la dejo en paz, me deja
en paz;

el diario, por supuesto,
está arruinado;
algo pasó,
algo empañó mi día,
a veces no hace falta
un hombre o una mujer,
solamente algo vivo;
me siento y miro a
la mosca chiquita;
estamos juntos trenzados
en el aire
y la vida;
y ya es tarde
para nosotros dos.

por las calles de un sitio cualquiera

claro que no tiene sentido arreglar un
viejo poema mientras bebes una cerveza caliente
un domingo en la tarde; es mejor simplemente
existir mientras el cigarro acaba;
la gente es indiferente y a pesar de que éste es un
mal término para describir
en la radio está Gershwin
golpeando y pidiendo salir;
he leído los periódicos,
fijándome cuidadosamente en los suicidios,
y también incluso he notado
lo verde de un árbol
como un poeta de la naturaleza en su última copa,
y
bang bang
helos ahí puertas afuera;
nuevos hijos, algunos alistándose
para sentarse aquí, y hacer lo que hago;
cerveza caliente, Gershwin muerto,
engordándose en, la panza,
sin creer que llegarán los años de hambruna,
Atlanta huela como la cabeza de Dios
sosteniendo una manzana en la ventana,
pero al final terminamos todos engatuzados y
golpeados a morir
como promesas de amantes, regateados
sin ningún beneficio,
y la radio acaba
y el teléfono suena y una mujer dice,
“estoy libre esta noche”; y bien, ella no es mucho
pero tampoco yo lo soy;
en el ardor adolescente pensé alguna vez que podía montar

un caballo por las calles de cualquier sitio,
pero rápidamente le dispararon de abajo,
“¿Tienes cigarrillos?”, pregunta ella. “Sí”, digo,
“Tengo cigarrillos”. “¿Fósforos?”, pregunta.

“Suficientes fósforos para incendiar Roma”. “¿Whiskey?”
“Suficiente whiskey para un Río Mississippi
de dolor”. “¿Estás borracho?” “Aún no”.
Ella estará encima: perfecto:
un peor-es-nada y un breve subidón, y
yo observo el poema en el que intento trabajar:

digo que
los callejones cubrirán
los ladridos
mientras la tarde cubre a los trabajadores
de Salinas...

mierda. rompí la página una, dos,
tres veces, fui a buscar fósforos y
cubos de hielo, frío y caliente,
con algunos hombres la conversación es mejor que
su creación
y con otros hombres
es una mujer
casi cualquier mujer
la que es su Rodin entre las bancas del parque;
pájaro caído en la pista esperando las ratas y las llantas
sé que te he abandonado,
los cubos de hielo se apilan como oro para tontos
en el jarro
y ahora están poniendo a
Alex Scriabin
lo que es un poco mejor

pero no mucho
para mí.

estación de bomberos

(para Jane, con amor)

nos fuimos del bar
porque ya no teníamos dinero
pero teníamos un par de botellas de vino
en la habitación.

eran alrededor de las 4 de la tarde
y pasamos por una estación de bomberos
y ella comenzó a enloquecer:

“¡una ESTACIÓN DE BOMBEROS! ¡ay, me encantan
los coches de BOMBEROS, son tan rojos y
tal! ¡entremos!”

la seguí.
“¡COCHES DE BOMBEROS!”, gritó
bamboleando su enorme
trasero.

intentaba ya trepar a
uno, la falda arremangada hasta la
cintura, su cuerpo doblado en dos hacia arriba
del asiento.

“¡espere, espere, déjeme ayudarla!” dijo un bombero corriendo
hacia ella.

otro bombero se acercó
a mí: “los visitantes siempre son bienvenidos”,
me dijo.

el otro tipo había subido al asiendo con ella. “¿tiene una de esas COSAS enormes?”

preguntó ella. “¡ah, ja ja ja! ¡quiero decir uno de esos CASCOS enormes!”

“también tengo un casco grande”,
le contestó él.

“¡ah, ja ja ja!”

“¿juegas a las cartas?”, le pregunté a mi bombero. yo tenía 43 centavos y me sobraba el tiempo.

“pasa al fondo”,
me dijo. “por supuesto que no apostamos dinero.
va contra el
reglamento”.

“comprendo”,
le dije.

mis 43 centavos habían aumentado a
un dólar noventa
cuando vi que ella subía al piso de arriba con
su bombero.

“va a enseñarme los dormitorios”,
me dijo.

“comprendo”,
contesté.

cuando su bombero se deslizó barra abajo

diez minutos después
le hice un gesto con la cabeza
para que se acercara.

“me debes 5 dólares
por eso”.

“¿5 dólares
por eso?”

“no queremos un escándalo,
¿verdad?, los dos podríamos perder nuestros
empleos. aunque yo no tengo trabajo, claro”.

me dio los
5.

“siéntate, puede que recuperes”.

“¿a qué juegan?”
“al blackjack”.

“apostar va contra el
reglamento”.

“como todo lo bueno. además,
¿ves algún dinero sobre la
mesa?”
se sentó.

ahora éramos
5.

“¿qué tal estuvo, Harry?”, le preguntó
alguien.

“no estuvo mal, no estuvo mal”.

el otro se fue
escaleras arriba.

jugaban realmente mal.
no se preocupaban por recordar
las cartas. no sabían si quedaban cartas
altas o bajas. y sobre todo siempre se pasaban,
nunca se paraban
a tiempo.

cuando el otro tipo bajó
me dio un billete de
cinco.

“¿qué tal te fue, Marty?”
“no estuvo mal, sabe...
moverse”.

“¡carta!”, dije. “una
chica limpia y simpática.
yo también la he probado”.

nadie dijo
nada.

“¿algún incendio grande últimamente?”
pregunté.

“nada. poca
cosa”.

“necesitan un poco
de ejercicio, muchachos. ¡otra
carta!”

un muchachote pelirrojo que había estado sacando brillo a
un camión
tiró el trapo y
subió las escaleras.

cuando bajó me tiró un billete de
cinco.

cuando el 4º tipo bajó le di
3 billetes de cinco y él me dio uno
de veinte.

no sé cuántos bomberos
había en el edificio o dónde
estaban.
supongo que alguno se me escapó
pero yo me lo tomé
deportivamente.

fuera estaba oscureciendo
cuando sonó
la alarma.

empezaron a correr de un lado a otro.
los chicos bajaban deslizándose por la barra.

entonces bajó ella deslizándose por la
barra. era buena en la
barra. una mujer de verdad. toda agallas
y
culo.

“vámonos”,
le dije.

ella se quedó allí de pie diciendo adiós con la mano
a los bomberos, pero a ellos ya
no parecía interesarles.

“volvamos al
bar”,
le dije.

“eh, ¿tienes
dinero?”

“encontré un poco que no sabía
que tenía...”

nos sentamos al final de la barra
con unos whiskies y después cerveza.
“sí que necesito un buen
descanso”.

“claro, nena, necesitas descansar”.

“¡mira cómo me mira ese marinero!
debe pensar que soy... una...”

“nada, no piensa eso. tranquila, tú tienes
estilo, un gran estilo. a veces me recuerdas a una
cantante de ópera. ya sabes, una de esas prima donnas.
se te nota el estilo en todo.
bébete la copa”.

pedí 2

más.

“sabes, papi, tú eres el único hombre que AMO, ¡me refiero al verdadero... AMOR! ¿lo sabes?”

“claro que lo sé. a veces me siento como un rey a pesar de todo”.

“sí, sí. a eso me refiero, algo así”.

tuve que ir al servicio. cuando regresé el marinero estaba sentado en mi sitio. ella le había pasado una pierna por encima y él hablaba.

pasé por delante de ellos y me puse a jugar dardos con Harry el caballo y el chico aquel que vendía periódicos en la esquina.

te amo

abrí la puerta de esta covacha y estaba ella
mi amor
sobre la espalda de un hombre de calzoncillos sucios.
yo era Charley el violento duro “fácil con el dinero” (ese era yo)
y los desperté a los dos
como Dios
y cuando ella despertó
empezó a gritar, “¡Hank, Hank!” (ese es mi otro nombre)
“¡llévame lejos de este hijo de puta!
¡lo odio, te amo!”

por supuesto, yo era lo suficientemente listo para no creermelo
[nada de esto y me senté y dije,
“necesito un trago, me duele la cabeza y necesito un
trago”.

así es como el amor funciona, ves, y luego todos nos sentamos
[bebiendo whisky y estaba
perfectamente satisfecho
y entonces él me dio uno de cinco,
“eso es todo lo que queda de lo que ella agarró, eso es todo lo que
[queda de lo que ella agarró de ti”.

no era yo un ángel de alas de oro rasgado
tomé los cinco
y los dejé allí
y caminé por el callejón
hacia la calle Alvarado
y giré a la izquierda
rumbo al primer
bar.

una pequeña bomba atómica

oh, dame una pequeña bomba
no muy grande
sólo un poco
suficiente para matar un caballo en la calle
pero no hay caballos en la calle

bien, suficiente para derribar las flores de una maceta
pero no veo
flores en ninguna maceta

suficiente entonces
para atemorizar a mi amor
pero no poseo ningún
amor

bien
dame una bomba atómica entonces
para restregar mi bañera
como un sucio y adorable niño

(tengo una bañera)

sólo una pequeña bomba atómica, general,
con nariz de dogo
orejas rosadas
oliendo como a calzoncillos en
julio

¿crees que estoy loco?
creo que estás loco
también
así que:

dame una antes de que otro
lo haga.

el huevo

él tiene 17.

madre, dice, ¿cómo rompes un huevo?

está bien, me dijo ella, no tienes que sentarte allí mirando de ese modo.

oh, madre, dice él, lo rompiste.
no puedo comerlo roto.

está bien, me dijo ella, eres rudo,
has estado en mataderos, en fábricas,
en cárceles, eres tan malditamente rudo,
pero toda la gente no tiene que ser como tú,
eso no hace que la gente esté equivocada y tú
en lo cierto.

madre, dice él, ¿podrás traerme galletas
cuando regreses del trabajo?

mira, Raleigh, dice ella, puedes ir por las galletas
en tu bicicleta, estoy cansada después del
trabajo.

pero, mamá, hay una colina.

¿qué colina, Raleigh?

hay una colina,
está allí y tengo que lidiar con eso.

está bien, me dijo, te crees que eres

tan malditamente rudo. trabajaste en un ferrocarril,
lo escucho cada vez que tomas:
“trabajé en un ferrocarril”.

sí, dije, lo hice.

me refiero a que ¿cuál es la diferencia?
todo el mundo tiene que trabajar en algún lado.

mamá, dice el chico, ¿me traerás
galletas?

realmente me agrada el chico. creo que es bien
dulce. y una vez que aprenda a romper
el huevo quizás haga algunas
cosas interesantes. mientras tanto
duermo con su madre
e intento estar lejos de las
peleas.

las mujeres del verano

las mujeres del verano morirán como la rosa
y la mentira

las mujeres del verano amarán
siempre y cuando el precio
no sea eterno

las mujeres del verano
pueden amar a cualquiera;
incluso a ti
mientras dure el
verano

pero también les
llegará el invierno

nieve blanca
y frío helado
y caras tan feas
que incluso la muerte
hará una mueca de horror
antes de
llevárselas.

estoy enamorada

ella es joven, dijo,
pero mírame,
tengo lindos tobillos,
y mira mis muñecas, tengo lindas
muñecas
oh, Dios mío,
pensé que esto estaba funcionando,
y ahora está ella de nuevo,
cada vez que llama te vuelves loco,
me dijiste que estaba acabado
me dijiste que habían terminado,
escúchame, ya he vivido lo suficiente como
para convertirme en una buena mujer,
¿por qué necesitas una mujerzuela?
necesitas ser torturado, ¿no?
como crees que la vida es una porquería
si alguien te trata como una porquería
todo encaja, ¿no es así?
dime, ¿es así? ¿quieres ser tratado
como una mierda?
y mi hijo, mi hijo te iba a conocer.
se lo había dicho
y dejé a todos mis amantes.
me paré en un café y grité
ESTOY ENAMORADA,
y ahora me has hecho sentir como una estúpida...

lo siento, dije, lo siento mucho.

abrázame, dijo ella, podrías abrazarme, ¿por favor?

nunca estuve en algo así antes, dije,

estos triángulos...

ella se levantó y encendió un cigarrillo, estaba
temblando.

se paseaba de acá para allá, salvaje y loca.

ella

tenía un cuerpo pequeño. sus brazos eran delgados,
muy delgados, y cuando gritó y empezó a pegarme
la agarré de las muñecas y le miré directo a los ojos:
siglos de odio profundo y verdadero. yo no tenía gracia,
estaba equivocado y enfermo. todas las cosas que
había aprendido se malgastaban.

no había criatura viviente tan tonta como yo
y todos mis poemas eran
falsos.

la manzana

ésta no es sólo una manzana
ésta es una experiencia
rojo verde amarillo
con subyacentes hoyos blancos
mojados con agua fría
yo la muerdo
cristo, una puerta blanca...

otro mordisco
masticando
mientras pensaba en una vieja bruja
asfixiándose hasta morir con un poco de manzana
—historia infantil—

muerdo profundamente
mastico y trago

se siente como a cascadas
e infinitud

hay una mixtura de electricidad y
deseo.

aunque ahora
a mitad de la manzana
algunos sentimientos depresivos empiezan

está acabando
estoy por el corazón
evitando las semillas y el tallo

hay una marcha fúnebre empezando en Venice,

un viejo negro ha muerto luego de una vida de sufrimiento

tiré la manzana muy pronto
mientras una chica de vestido blanco camina junto a mi ventana

seguida por un niño la mitad de su tamaño
de pantalones azules y camisa
a rayas

dejo escapar un pequeño eructo
y me quedo mirando el cenicero
sucio.

el violinista

estaba en tribuna alta
al final
donde hacían sus estiramientos
después de salir de las curvas.

era un hombre pequeño
rosado, calvo, gordo
es sus sesentas.

estaba tocando violín
estaba tocando música clásica en
su violín
y los apostadores de caballos lo ignoraban.

Banker Agent ganó la primera carrera
y él tocaba su violín.

Can Fly ganó la 3ra carrera y
él continuaba tocando su violín.

fui por un café y cuando regresé
seguía tocando, y aún seguía tocando
después de que Boomerang ganara la 4ta.

nadie lo paraba
nadie le preguntaba por lo que hacía
nadie aplaudía.

luego de que Pawee ganó la 5ta
él continuó
la música cayendo por el borde de la
tribuna y más allá del

viento y el sol.

Stars and Stripes ganó la 6ta
y él tocó algo más
y Staunch Hope se metió por el interior
para tomar la 7ma
y el violinista tocaba de nuevo
y cuando Lucky Mike ganó 4 a 5 en la 8va
él seguía haciendo música.

luego de que Dumpty's Goddess tomara la última
y todos empezaran a caminar el largo y lento camino hacia sus autos
derrotados y en la ruina de nuevo
el violinista continuaba
mandando su música tras ellos
y me senté a escuchar
ambos estábamos solos allí y
cuando acabó aplaudí.
el violinista se paró
me miró y se inclinó.
luego puso su violín en la caja
se irguió y bajó por las gradas.

le dejé unos pocos minutos
y luego me paré
y empecé el largo y lento camino hacia mi auto.
estaba anocheciendo.

5 dólares

estoy muriendo de tristeza y alcohol
me dijo sobre la botella
en una tranquila tarde de jueves
en un viejo cuarto de hotel por la estación del tren.

me he traicionado con la
creencia, engañado con el amor
me trampee con el sexo.

la botella es malditamente fiel,
la botella no mentirá.

la carne se corta como se cortan las rosas
los hombres mueren como mueren los perros
el amor muere como mueren los perros,
dijo.

escucha, Ronny,
préstame 5 dólares, dije.

el amor necesita demasiado, dijo,
el odio se cuida a sí mismo.

sólo 5 dólares, Ronny.

el odio contiene verdad, la belleza es una fachada.

te pagaré en una semana.

acurrúcate en la espina
acurrúcate en la botella
acurrúcate en las voces de viejos en cuartos de hotel.

no he comido nada decente, Ronny, en un
par de días.

acurrúcate en la risa y el horror de la muerte.
quita la nata de la leche.
adelgaza, prepárate.

algo en mis tripas, Ronny, y podré hacerle
frente.

ése es el truco
morir solo y estar listo
y no ser sorprendido.

Ronny, escucha---

el llanto majestuoso que escuchas
no es para
nosotros.

supongo que no, Ronny.

las mentiras de los siglos, las mentiras del amor,
las mentiras de Sócrates y Blake y Cristo
serán nuestras compañeras de cama y lápida
en una muerte que nunca acaba.

Ronny, mis poemas son rechazados por el
New York Quarterly.

éste es el por qué de mi llanto,
fuera de todo conocimiento.

esto es todo lo que ese sonido es, dije,
mi divina mierda.

la noche que estuve a punto de morir

la noche en que estuve a punto de morir
estaba sudando en la cama
y podía oír a los grillos
y una pelea de gatos afuera
y sentí cómo mi alma se desprendía y
atravesaba el colchón
y justo antes de que tocara el suelo me levanté de un salto
estaba tan débil que casi no podía andar
pero caminé de un lado a otro y encendí todas las luces
después regresé a la cama
y otra vez mi alma se desprendió y atravesó el colchón
y me levanté de un salto
justo antes de que tocara el suelo
caminé de un lado a otro y prendí todas las luces
y después volví a la cama
y otra vez se desprendió y
me levanté
y prendí todas las luces

yo tenía una hija de 7 años
y estaba seguro de que ella no quería que muriese
sino no me hubiese
importado

pero durante toda aquella noche
nadie llamó por teléfono
nadie vino a verme con una cerveza
mi novia no llamó
todo lo que podía oír eran grillos y hacía
calor
y seguí entregado al asunto
levantándome y acostándome

hasta que el primer rayo de sol entró por la ventana
a través de los arbustos
y entonces me metí en la cama
y el alma se quedó
dentro por fin
y me dormí.
ahora la gente viene a verme
llaman a mi puerta y ventanas
el teléfono suena
el teléfono suena una y otra vez
recibo cartas fantásticas por correo
cartas de odio y cartas de amor.
todo vuelve a ser igual.

Duane 2347

hay una bebé azul y está chupando
de un pecho azul bajo una verde vid que ha
crecido en el techo,
y más allá a la derecha
hay una chica trigueña
contra un fondo marrón oscuro
apoyándose en una silla y parece
pensativa, supongo.
mi cigarrillo se ha apagado
nunca hay fósforos por aquí
y me levanto y voy a la cocina
y lo enciendo en la cocina de 30 años de antigüedad.
regreso sin imprevistos.
ahora detrás de mí en una silla rosada
hay unas grandes y antiguas tijeras.
son las doce y 15 de la noche
y el gancho está en la puerta
y sobre la alta lámpara al lado de la cama
hay un sombrero rojo que cuelga que es usado
como pantalla
y un pequeño perro gruñe afuera hacia el cielo helado.
hay dos colchones en el piso
y he dormido en uno de ellos
muchas noches.
dicen que van a derribar este lugar
que le pertenece a un luchador japonés llamado Fuji.
no creo que podría reemplazarse por algo mejor.

ella ha arreglado el caño de la bañera y el del lavatorio
esta noche. no puede armar un cigarrillo pero se encarga
de la cuenta del fontanero.
comimos pollo de Sanders con ensalada de col,

puré de papas, salsa y galletas.
son las doce y 23 de la noche
y van a derribar este lugar,
no quiero decir mañana, pero sí pronto,
y el pequeño perro le gruñe al cielo de nuevo
y mi cigarrillo de nuevo apagado;
el amor que tiene ese colchón junto a la puerta,
el sexo y las peleas y los sueños y las
conversaciones,
cuando llegue aquel tractor no va a poder tirar todo eso,
y aún cuando derribe los árboles y el cagadero
y haga hoyos en el caminito que da asco
no lo tendrá todo,
y cuando conduzca dentro de 6 meses y vea
el nuevo edificio lleno con 50 personas de
ingresos estables,
seguiré recordando la bebé azul chupando
el pecho azul,
la vid desde el techo, la chica trigueña,
los caños goteando, las arañas y las termitas,
la pintura amarilla y gris, el mantel en la
ventana frontal y el colchón al lado de la puerta.

una radio con agallas

fue en el 2º piso de la calle Coronado
yo solía emborracharme
y tirar la radio encendida por la
ventana, y, por supuesto
rompía los cristales
y la radio caía sobre el tejado
y seguía sonando
y le decía a mi mujer:
"¡ah, qué radio tan maravillosa!"

a la mañana siguiente quitaba
el marco de la ventana
y lo llevaba calle abajo con el cristalero
para que le colocara otro cristal.

seguí tirando la radio por la ventana
cada vez que me emborrachaba
y caía sobre el tejado
y seguía sonando...
una radio mágica
una radio con agallas,
y cada mañana volvía a llevar la ventana
al cristalero.

no recuerdo cómo acabó aquello exactamente
aunque sí recuerdo
que al final nos mudamos.
había una mujer en el piso de abajo que trabajaba en
el jardín en traje de baño
y su marido se quejaba de que no podía dormir por la noche
por mi culpa
así que nos fuimos

y en la siguiente casa
me olvidé de tirar la radio por la ventana
o no quise
hacerlo más.

recuerdo que extrañé a la mujer del
jardín en traje de baño,
cavaba entusiasmada con aquella pala
agachando la cabeza y levantando el culo
y yo me sentaba junto a la ventana
para ver el sol brillar sobre su espalda

mientras la música sonaba.

entrevistas

los jóvenes del movimiento subterráneo
con sus periódicos y revistas
de poca circulación
llegan con frecuencia a entrevistarme.
sus melenas son largas
sus cuerpos delgados
tienen grabadoras y
vienen con abundante cerveza.
muchos de ellos
se las arreglan para quedarse algunas horas y
terminan borrachos.

si estoy con alguna de mis amigas
logro que ella hable.
sigue adelante —digo—
cuéntales la verdad.

entonces ellas cuentan lo que les parece
que es la verdad.

me pintan como algo semejante a un idiota
lo cual es cierto.

entonces soy interrogado:

¿por qué dejó de escribir durante diez años?

no sé.

¿por qué no entró en el ejército?

por loco.

¿sabe hablar alemán?

no.

¿cuáles son sus escritores modernos preferidos?

no lo sé.

raras veces veo las entrevistas.
aunque cierta vez uno de estos jóvenes
me contó que mi novia lo había besado
mientras yo estaba en el baño.

te la llevaste fácil, le dije
y dicho sea de paso
olvídate de esa pendejada que te dije sobre
Dos Passos. ¿o fue acerca de Mailer?
hace calor esta noche
y la mitad del vecindario está borracha.
la otra mitad está muerta.
si tengo algún consejo que dar acerca de escribir
poesía es éste: no lo hagas.
ahora estoy enviando a alguien
a comprar. algo de pollo frito.

Buk

la cara del candidato en un afiche callejero

ahí está él:

sin demasiadas resacas

sin demasiadas peleas con mujeres

sin demasiadas llantas pinchadas

nunca un pensamiento de suicidio

no más de tres dolores de muela

nunca le faltó comida

nunca en prisión

nunca enamorado

7 pares de zapatos

un hijo en la universidad

un carro de un año de antigüedad

pólizas de seguros

un jardín muy verde

tachos de basura con tapas bien cerradas

será elegido.

¡luna azul, oh luna azuuulll cómo te adoro!

me preocupo por ti, cariño, te amo,
la única razón por la que jodí con L. es porque tú te jodiste a Z. y
[después me jodí a R. y tú a N.

y porque te jodiste a N. me jodí a
Y. Pero pienso en ti constantemente, te siento
aquí en mi vientre como un bebé, yo lo llamo amor,
no importa lo que suceda yo lo llamo amor, y como te
jodiste a C. y antes de que pudiera hacer algo
te jodiste a W., entonces tuve que joderme a D. Pero
quiero que sepas que te amo, pienso en ti
constantemente, no creo que haya amado a nadie
como te amo a ti.

uau uau uau uau uau
uau uau uau uau uau.

nada es tan eficaz como la derrota

siempre lleva un cuaderno de apuntes contigo
adonde vayas, me dijo,
y no bebas mucho, beber entorpece
las sensibilidades,
ve a las lecturas, toma apunte de las pausas del aliento,
y cuando leas
siempre subestima
réstale importancia, el público es más inteligente de lo que
puedas creer,
y cuando escribas algo
no lo envíes enseguida,
mételo en un cajón por dos semanas,
luego sácalo y obsérvalo,
y revisa, revisa,
REVISA una y otra vez,
ajusta las líneas como pernos sosteniendo la envergadura
de un puente de 5 millas,
y ten un cuaderno de apuntes cerca de tu cama,
tendrás pensamientos por la noche
y estos pensamientos se desvanecerán y perderán
a menos que los anotes.
y no bebas, cualquier idiota puede
beber, nosotros somos hombres de
letras.

para alguien que no podía escribir en absoluto
él era como el resto
de ellos:
de seguro que podía
hablar de
eso.

África, París, Grecia

ahí están estas dos mujeres
que conozco, son bastante
parecidas

casi los mismos años
de buenas
lecturas
literarias

una vez dormí con ambas
pero eso fue todo

somos amigos

han estado en África
París
Grecia

aquí y allá

cogiendo con hombres famosos

una vive ahora con un
millonario
a unas millas
de aquí
desayunan y
cenan juntos,
ella alimenta a su pez a sus gatos y
a su perro
cuando se emborracha
suele llamarme

la otra vive momentos
más difíciles,
sola en un pequeño departamento en
Venecia (Calif.)
escuchando los tambores del
bongo

parece que los hombres famosos quieren
mujeres jóvenes

una joven es más fácil de
dejar:
tiene más lugares
adonde ir

es difícil para una mujer que
alguna vez fue hermosa
envejecer

tienen que volverse más
inteligentes (si quieren retener
a sus hombres) y hacer
más cosas
dentro y fuera
de la cama

estas dos mujeres que conozco
son buenas
dentro y fuera
de la cama

y son inteligentes
bastante inteligentes como para saber
que no pueden venir a verme

y quedarse
más de una
o dos horas,
y tan parecidas son

y sé
que si leen este poema
lo
entenderán
tan bien como
entienden
a
Rimbaud o Rilke

o Keats

mientras tanto he conocido
a una joven rubia
del distrito de Fairfax

ella observa mis pinturas
en las paredes
y yo le froto las plantas de
los pies.

El juez borracho

el juez borracho llega tarde
como cualquier juez
y es
joven
bien alimentado
educado
mimado y
de buena
familia.

los borrachos sacamos nuestros cigarrillos y esperamos su
misericordia.

los que no pudieron pagar fianza van
primero. «culpable», dicen, todos dicen,
«culpable».
«7 días». «14 días». «14 días y luego serán liberados a la
Granja del Honor». «4 días». «7 días».
«14 días».

«juez, estos muchachos golpean a cualquiera
que pase».

«siguiente».

«juez, ellos me van a moler a golpes».

«el próximo caso, por favor».

«7 días». «14 días y luego serán liberados a la
Granja del Honor».

el juez borracho es
joven y ha
comido demasiadas veces. está
gordo.

los borrachos sin fianza son los
siguientes. nos pone en largas filas para
ocuparse de nosotros
rápidamente. «2 días ó 40 dólares». «2 días ó 40 dólares».
«2 días ó 40 dólares». «2 días ó
40 dólares».

somos 35 ó
40.
la corte está en San Fernando más allá de los
basureros.

cuando nos acercamos al alguacil nos
dice,
«su fianza se aplicará».

«¿qué?».
«su fianza se aplicará».

la fianza es de \$50. la corte se guarda los
diez.

salimos y entramos en nuestros
viejos autos.
la mayor parte de nuestros coches luce peor que
los basureros. algunos no tienen
auto. la mayoría somos
blancos pobres y mexicanos.
los trenes están cruzando la
calle. el sol está

alto.

el juez tiene una muy
suave
y delicada
piel. el juez tiene
mandíbulas
gruesas.

caminamos y conducimos alejándonos de la
corte.

de la justicia.

garras del paraíso

mariposa de madera
sonrisa de bicarbonato
mosca de aserrín...
me gusta mi barriga
y el tipo de la licorería
me llama
«Sr. Schlitz».
las cajas de los hipódromos
gritan
«¡EL POETA SABE!»
cuando cobro mis apuestas.
las mujeres
dentro y fuera de la cama
dicen que me aman
mientras camino con pies
húmedos y pálidos.

albatros ebrio
calzoncillos sucios de Popeye
zancudos de París,
he limpiado las barricadas
he dominado al
automóvil
a la resaca
a las lágrimas
pero conozco la
condena final
como un colegial mirando
al gato machacado por
el tráfico.

la bóveda de mi cerebro tiene

una grieta de dos centímetros
sólo me quedan los dientes
de enfrente. Me desmayo
en los supermercados
escupo sangre cuando bebo
whiskey
y me entristezco hasta
dolerme
cuando pienso en todas las
buenas mujeres que he conocido
disueltas
y desvanecidas
en trivialidades:
viajes a Pasadena,
picnics con los niños,
tapas de pasta dental
en el desagüe.

no hay nada que hacer
mas que beber
jugar a los caballos
apostar al poema

mientras las muchachas
se vuelven mujeres
y las ametralladoras
apuntan hacia mí
que me oculto
tras paredes delgadas
como párpados.

no hay defensa
excepto todos los errores
cometidos.

por ahora
tomo un baño
contesto el teléfono
hiervo huevos
estudio el movimiento y el desgaste
y me siento bien
como la siguiente vez
caminando bajo el sol.

el solitario

20 centímetros y medio de
cuello
68 años
levantaba pesas
cuerpo como de
joven (casi)

siempre la cabeza
rapada
y las botellas de oporto
de medio galón

las ventanas
entabladas y
el cerrojo puesto en la puerta

tenías que tocar
de una manera especial
si querías entrar

utilizaba cucharas de latón
cuchillos
garrotes
armas de fuego

tenía el pecho como de
luchador
nunca perdió
sus lentes

nunca juró
nunca buscó

problemas

nunca se casó después de la muerte
de su única
esposa

odiaba a los
gatos
a las cucarachas
los ratones
los humanos

llenaba crucigramas
rompecabezas
iba siempre con un periódico
en la mano

ese cuello de 20 centímetros
y medio

para tener 68 había conseguido
ser alguien

todas aquellas tablas
cruzadas tras las ventanas

lavaba sus propios calzoncillos
y calcetines

mi amigo Red me llevó
a conocerlo
una noche

conversamos
un rato

luego lo dejamos

Red preguntó: «¿qué
piensas?»

«con más miedo a morir
que el resto de nosotros», respondí.

no he vuelto a ver a ninguno desde
entonces.

El sandwich

Caminé calle abajo por un sandwich
submarino
y un chico que salió de la calle
del Instituto de Educación Sexual
casi pasa sobre mis pies
con su bici;
tenía una barba negra y sucia
ojos como de pianista ruso
y el aliento de una puta del este de Kansas;
me enojó que casi me matara
un tonto en una chaqueta con lentejuelas;
miré escaleras arriba y las chicas sentadas
afuera de sus puertas
soñando con viejas películas de Greta Garbo;
Puse medio dólar en uno de los estantes de periódicos
y tomé la ultima revista de sexo;
luego entré en la tienda de sandwiches
y pedí el submarino
y un café grande.
todas las que estaban ahí hablaban de
cómo perder peso.
pedí una orden
de papas fritas.
las chicas de los anuncios de la revista
parecen chicas en anuncios de revista
y me dicen que no esté solo
que ellas pueden ayudarme:
puedo azotarlas con cadenas o látigos
o ellas pueden azotarme
con cadenas o látigos, cualquier
cosa que desee.
acabé, pagué, dejé propina,

dejé el periódico en el asiento.
caminé de regreso a Western Avenue
con la barriga colgando sobre
el cinturón.

La vida feliz de los cansados

Delicadamente sintonizado con
la canción de un pez
estoy en la cocina
a medio camino de la locura
soñando con la España
de Hemingway.

hace calor, como se dice,
no puedo respirar;
cagué y
leí los deportes,
abrí el refrigerador
vi un pedazo de carne
morada
y la dejé ahí.

el lugar para encontrar el centro
esta en el límite,
el crujido en el cielo
no es más que una pipa de agua
vibrando.

cosas terribles recorren las
paredes; flores de cáncer crecen
en el porche; a mi gato blanco
le arrancaron un ojo
y sólo quedan 7 días
de carreras en la temporada de verano.

la bailarina nunca llegó del
Club Normandy
y Jimmy no trajo a la

puta,
pero hay una postal desde
Arkansas
y un impreso desechable del food King:
10 días gratis en Hawai,
todo lo que hay que hacer
es rellenar el formato,
pero no quiero ir a
Hawai
quiero la puta con ojos de pelicano
ombligo de bronce
y
corazón de marfil.
saco el pedazo de carne
morada,
y lo echo a la
sartén.

el teléfono suena.

caigo sobre una rodilla
y ruedo debajo
la mesa. Ahí me quedo
hasta que deja de sonar.
después me levanto y
prendo
la radio.

no me extraña que Hemingway fuera
un borracho, ¡maldita España!
yo tampoco puedo
soportarla.
hace demasiado calor.

los orgullosos y delgados moribundos

veo gente vieja pensionada/jubilada en los
supermercados y son delgados y
orgullosos y están muriéndose
están hambrientos de pie y sin decir
nada. tiempo atrás, entre otras mentiras,
les enseñaron que el silencio era
valentía. ahora, habiendo trabajado toda una vida,
la inflación los ha atrapado. miran alrededor
roban una uva
la mastican. finalmente hacen una pequeñísima
compra, la ganancia del día.
otra mentira que les enseñaron:
no debes robar.
preferirían pasar hambre a robar
(una uva no es algo tan grave)
y en pequeñas habitaciones
lean los anuncios del mercado
pasarán hambre
morirán sin emitir sonido
echados de pensiones
por jóvenes rubios de cabello largo
que los jalarán
y los tirarán fuera del borde de la acera, estos
chicos
de hermosos ojos
pensando en Las Vegas en sexo y
victoria.
es el orden de las cosas: todos
probamos la miel
luego el cuchillo.

el asesino sonríe

las viejas novias aún llaman
algunas del año pasado
algunas del año anterior
algunas de los años anteriores a ése.
es bueno terminar los asuntos
cuando no funcionan
es bueno también no odiar
incluso olvidar
a la persona con la que ~~le~~
fallaste.

y me gusta cuando me dicen
que tienen suerte con un hombre
con su vida.

después de sobrevivir a mí
tienen muchas alegrías.
yo hago que sus vidas parezcan mejores
después de mí.

les he dado
puntos de comparación
nuevos horizontes
nuevos penes
más paz
un buen futuro
sin mí.

y siempre cuelgo,
justificado.

sirena

tenía que ir al baño por algo
y toqué
y estabas en la bañera
te habías lavado la cara y el cabello
y te vi la parte de arriba
y excepto por los pechos
parecías una chica de 5, u 8
estabas meciéndote alegremente en el agua
Linda Lee.

no eras sólo la esencia de aquél
momento
sino de todos mis momentos
hasta entonces
bañándote con facilidad en el marfil
y no había nada que
pudiera decirte.

tomé lo que andaba
buscando
y salí.

abraza la oscuridad

la confusión es el dios
la locura es el dios

la vida permanente de la paz es
la vida permanente de la muerte.

la agonía puede matar
o
sostener la vida
pero la paz es siempre horrible
la paz es la peor cosa
caminando
hablando
sonriendo,
pareciendo ser.

no olvides las aceras
las putas,
la traición,
el gusano en la manzana,
los bares, las cárceles,
los suicidios de los amantes.

aquí en Estados Unidos
hemos asesinado a un presidente y a su hermano,
otro presidente renunció al cargo.

la gente que cree en la política
es como la gente que cree en dios:
están sorbiendo aire con pajitas
torcidas.

no hay dios
no hay política
no hay paz
no hay amor
no hay control
no hay ningún plan

aléjate de dios
continúa perturbado

deslízate.

59 centavos la libra

me gusta vagar por los lugares cotidianos
y saborear a la gente
—desde cierta distancia—.

no los quiero demasiado cerca
porque es cuando el desgaste comienza.

pero en los supermercados
las lavanderías

los cafés

las esquinas

los paraderos

los restaurantes

los kioscos

puedo mirar sus cuerpos

y sus caras

y su ropa

la manera en que caminan

o se paran

o lo que están haciendo.

soy como un aparato de rayos-x

me gustan así:

a la vista.

imagino las mejores cosas

de ellos.

los imagino bravos y locos

los imagino bellos.

me gusta vagar por los lugares cotidianos.

siento pena por todos nosotros o felicidad

por todos nosotros

atrapados vivos al mismo tiempo

y torpes por eso.

no hay nada mejor que
el chiste que somos
lo serio que somos
lo estúpido que somos

comprando medias y zanahorias y chicles
y revistas
comprando control de natalidad
caramelos
spray
y papel higiénico.

deberíamos construir una gran fogata
deberíamos felicitarnos por nuestra
resistencia

hacemos largas colas
caminamos
esperamos.

me gusta vagar por los lugares cotidianos
la gente se explica sola
y yo hago lo mismo

una mujer a las 3:35 de la tarde
pesando uvas púrpuras en una balanza
mirando la balanza muy
seriamente
ella tiene un vestido simple, verde
con un diseño de flores blancas
agarra las uvas
y las pone con cuidado dentro de una bolsa
de papel.

eso es iluminación suficiente

los generales y los doctores pueden matarnos
pero nosotros
hemos ganado.

metamorfosis

una novia llegó
me hizo la cama
refregó y encendió el piso de la cocina
refregó las paredes
aspiró
limpió el water
la bañera
refregó el piso del baño
y cortó mis uñas de los pies y
el pelo.

luego
todo en el mismo día
el plomero llegó y arregló el caño de la cocina
y el water
y el hombre del gas arregló la estufa
y el hombre del teléfono arregló el teléfono.
ahora me siento aquí en toda esta perfección.
hay calma.
he roto con mis 3 novias.

me sentía mejor cuando todo estaba en
desorden.
me tomará algunos meses el que todo vuelva a la
normalidad:
no puedo encontrar una sola cucaracha con quien conversar.

he perdido mi ritmo.
no puedo dormir.
no puedo comer.

me han robado
la suciedad.

llorar

sudando en la cocina
tratando de sacar uno de mis
56 años de miedo saltando por mis brazos
las uñas de los pies demasiado largas
crecidas metidas en la pierna

la diferencia con las fábricas era
que todos sentíamos dolor
juntos

la otra noche fui a ver a la
gran soprano
seguía hermosa
sensual
seguía con un luto personal
pero perdía nota tras nota
borracha
asesinó al arte

sudando en la cocina
no quiero asesinar al arte

debería ver al doctor y que me sacaran esa cosa
de la pierna
pero soy un cobarde
gritaría y asustaría a algún niño
en la sala de espera

me gustaría joderme a la gran soprano
me gustaría llorar sobre su cabello

y está Lorca en el camino

tragando balas españolas en el polvo

la gran soprano nunca ha leído mis poemas
pero ambos sabemos cómo asesinar al arte
beber y llorar

sudando en esta cocina
las fórmulas se han ido
el mejor poeta que conocí está muerto
los otros me escriben cartas

les digo que quiero joderme
a la gran soprano
pero me responden con otras
cosas
cosas inútiles
tontas
vanas

veo una mosca sobre mi radio

ella sabe lo que es
pero no puede decírmelo

la soprano está muerta.

arte

cuando el
espíritu
se desvanece
aparece
la
forma.

Play the Piano Drunk Like a Percussion Instrument Until The Fingers
Begin To Bleed a Bit

Charles Bukowski

Black Sparrow Press, 1979

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Dedication

for Linda Lee Beighle, the best

waiting
in a life full of little stories
for a death to come

tough company

poems like gunslingers
sit around and
shoot holes in my windows
chew on my toilet paper
read the race results
take the phone off the
hook.

poems like gunslingers
ask me
what the hell my game is,
and
would I like to
shoot it out?

take it easy, I say,
the race is not to
the swift.

the poem sitting at the
south end of the couch
draws
says
balls off for that
one!

take it easy, pardner, I
have plans for
you.

plans, huh? what
plans?

The New Yorker,
pard.

he puts his iron
away.

the poem sitting in the
chair near the door
stretches
looks at me:
you know, fat boy, you
been pretty lazy

lately.

fuck off
I say
who's running this
game?

we're running this
game
say all the
gunslingers
drawing iron:
get
with it!

so
here you
are:

this poem
was the one
who was sitting
on top of the
refrigerator
flipping
beercaps.

and now
I've got him
out of the way
and all the others
are sitting around pointing
their weapons at me and
saying:

I'm next, I'm next, I'm
next!

I suppose that when
I die
the leftovers
will jump some other
poor
son of a bitch.

12-24-78

I suck on this beer
in my kitchen
and think about
cleaning my fingernails
and shaving
as I listen to the
classical radio
station.

they play holiday
music.

I prefer to hear Christmas
music in July
while I am being threatened
with death by
a woman.

that's
when I need it---
that's

when I need
Bing Crosby and the
elves and
some fast
reindeer.

now I sit here
listening to this
slop in
season---it's such
a sugar tit---
I'd rather play a game of
ping-pong with
the risen ghost
of Hitler.

amateur drunks run their cheerful
cars into each other
the ambulances sing to each
other outside.

an ideal

the Waxmans, she said,
he starved,
all these builders wanted to
buy him;
he worked in Paris in London and
even in Africa,
he had his own
concept of
design ...

what the fuck? I said,
a starving architect,
eh?

yes, yes, he starved and his
wife and his children
but he was true to
his ideals.

a starving architect,
eh?

yes, he finally came through,
I saw him and his wife last
Wednesday night, the Waxmans ...
would you care to meet
them?

tell him, I said, to stick 3 fingers up
his ass
and flick-off.

you're always so fucking nasty, she said,
knocking over her tall-stemmed
glass of scotch and
water.

uh huh, I said, in honor of
the dead.

leaning on wood

there are 4 or 5 guys at the
racetrack bar.

there is a mirror behind the
bar.

the reflections are not
kind

of the 4 or 5 guys at the
racetrack bar.

there are many bottles at the
racetrack bar.

we order different drinks.

there is a mirror behind the
bar.

the reflections are not
kind.

"it don't take brains to beat
the horses, it just takes money
and guts."

our reflections are not
kind.

the clouds are outside.
the sun is outside.
the horses are warming up outside.

we stand at the racetrack
bar.

"I've been playing the races for
40 years and I still can't beat
them."

"you can play the races for another
40 years and you still won't beat
them."

the bartender doesn't like
us.
the 5 minute warning buzzer
sounds.

we finish our drinks and
turn away to make our
bets.

our reflections look better
as we walk away:
you can't see our
faces.

4 or 5 guys from the racetrack
bar.

what shit. nobody
wins. ask
Caesar.

the souls of dead animals

after the slaughterhouse
there was a bar around the corner
and I sat in there
and watched the sun go down
through the window,
a window that overlooked a lot
full of tall dry weeds.

I never showered with the boys at the
plant
after work
so I smelled of sweat and
blood.
the smell of sweat lessens after a
while
but the blood-smell begins to fulminate
and gain power.

I smoked cigarettes and drank beer
until I felt good enough to
board the bus
with the souls of all those dead
animals riding with
me;
heads would turn slightly
women would rise and move away from
me.

when I got off the bus
I only had a block to walk
and one stairway up to my
room
where I'd turn on my radio and
light a cigarette
and nobody minded me
at all.

another argument

she had an uncle who sniffed her
panties by
firelight while eating
crackerjack and
muffins with honey,
she sat across from me
in that Chinese place
the drinks kept coming and she
talked about Matisse, Iranian
coins, fingerbowls at Cambridge, Pound
at Salerno, Plato at
Madagascar, the death of
Schopenhauer, and the times she and
I had been together and
ebullient.

drunk in the afternoon
I knew she had kept me too long
and when I got back to the other
she was
raving
underprivileged
pissed and
bloody unorthodox burning
mad.

then she said it didn't matter anymore
and I felt like saying
what do you mean it doesn't matter anymore?
how can you say it about anything, least of
all us? where are your eyes and your feet and
your head? if the thin blue marching of troops is
correct, we are all about to be
murdered.

the red porsche

it feels good
to be driven about in a red
porsche
by a woman better-
read than I
am.

it feels good
to be driven about in a red
porsche
by a woman who can explain
things about
classical
music to
me.

it feels good
to be driven about in a red
porsche
by a woman who buys
things for my refrigerator
and my
kitchen:
cherries, plums, lettuce, celery,
green onions, brown onions,
eggs, muffins, long
chilis, brown sugar,
Italian seasoning, oregano, white
wine vinegar, pompeian olive oil
and red
radishes.

I like being driven about
in a red porsche
while I smoke cigarettes in
gentle languor.

I'm lucky. I've always been
lucky:
even when I was starving to death
the bands were playing for
me.
but the red porsche is very nice
and she is
too, and
I've learned to feel good when

I feel good.

it's better to be driven around in a
red porsche
than to own
one. the luck of the fool is
inviolable.

some picnic

which reminds me
I shacked with Jane for 7 years
she was a drunk
I loved her

my Parents hated her
I hated my parents
it made a nice
foursome

one day we went on a picnic
together
up in the hills
and we played cards and drank beer and
ate potato salad and weenies

they talked to her as if she were a living person
at last

everybody laughed
I didn't laugh.

later at my place
over the whiskey
I said to her,
I don't like them
but it's good they treated you
nice.

you damn fool, she said,
don't you see?

see what?

they keep looking at my beer-belly,
they think I'm
pregnant.

oh, I said, well here's to our beautiful
child.

here's to our beautiful child,
she said.

we drank them down.

the drill

our marriage book, it
says.
I look through it.
they lasted ten years.
they were young once.
now I sleep in her bed.
he phones her:
"I want my drill back.
have it ready.
I'll pick the children up at
ten."
when he arrives he waits outside
the door.
his children leave with
him.
she comes back to bed
and I stretch a leg out
place it against hers.
I was young once too.
human relationships simply aren't
durable.
I think back to the women in
my life.
they seem non-existent.

"did he get his drill?" I ask.

"yes, he got his drill."

I wonder if I'll ever have to come
back for my bermuda
shorts and my record album
by The Academy of St. Martin in the
Fields? I suppose I
will.

40,000 flies

torn by a temporary wind
we come back together again

check walls and ceilings for cracks and
the eternal spiders

wonder if there will be one more
woman

now
40,000 flies running the arms of my
soul
singing
I met a million dollar baby in a
5 and 10 cent
store

arms of my soul?
flies?
singing?

what kind of shit is
this?

it's so easy to be a poet
and so hard to be
a man.

the strangest thing

I was sitting in a chair
in the dark
when horrible sounds of torture
and fear
began in the brush
outside of my window.
it was obviously not a male cat
and a female cat
but a male and a male
and from the sound
one appeared to be much larger
and was attacking with the intent to
kill.
then it stopped.

then it began again
worse this time;
the sounds were so terrible
that I was unable to
move.

then the sounds stopped.

I got up from my chair
went to bed and
slept.

I had a dream. this small grey and white
cat came to me in my dream
and it was very
sad. it spoke to me,
it said:
"look what the other cat did to me."
and it rested in my lap
and I saw the slashes and
the raw flesh. then it
jumped off my lap.

then that was all.

I awakened at 8:45 p.m.
put on my clothes and walked outside
and looked around.

there was nothing

there.

I walked back inside and
dropped two eggs
into a pot of water
and turned up the
flame.

the paper on the floor

... the drawing is poor and I know little of the plot:
a man with a stable, world-earned face and the necktie of
respectability, and a satisfied pipe; and his wife---
signified by the quick ink of black hair (just ever so
tousled with having babies and guiding them safely through
the falls): there is a grandmother who sits somewhat like
a flowerpot: allotted an earned space but not really
useful; and a couple of smiling, knee-climbing gamins
two little Jung and Adlers
full of moot, black-type questions,
and, of course,
a young girl troubled with young loves
(they take these things so much more seriously than the
young men who
go behind the barn);
and there is a young man---her, I presume barn-wise, brother
with this great tundra, this shield of black hair;
he is horribly healthy
and dressed in the latest in sport shirts
in the best barn-wise manner;
this big ... brother (16? 17? 18? God wot?)
is usually (when I read this, which is not very often)
leaning forward over the car seat
(he sits in the back, like the author)
and makes some ... comment on LIFE, capital all-the-way LIFE
that is so VERY true
that it just ... upsets everybody
except the poor kiddies who don't know what the hell it's
all about in spite of their Jung and Adler
and they just ride along round-eyed and sucking at their
lollypops all up in the pretty pure white clouds;
but, lo, the headman grinds his pipe grey-faced against this
sporty truth that old men let lie like overgrown
gas-meter covers; and the mother (wife wot?) draws down
a long black eyebrow and one more strand of hair becomes
unattached in the cool long struggle; and
Grandma, oh, I don't know---
by then I have looked away; but I remember the girl,
the young girl with young loves
is always especially angry
because the back of the barn has been blamed on her ...
locked with René the Frenchman, the struggling ... painter or
wot?
nobody wants to face it but this ... fat ... sports-wear shirt
character (who is really a nice strong boy who will really

be O.K. some day) keeps bringing the cow out from behind the
barn
with the bull; but he is young
and laughs
and all somehow bear up;
but best is his ... explanation of it all,
of the cow and the bull,
with the inherent and instinctive ... wiseness of his
youth;
the explanation usually comes in the morning
over the breakfast table---
before all this sickly struggling ordinary mess of common ...
humanity has had a chance
to seat itself
the healthy white ... face laughs and tells it all;
he's been sitting there waiting to tell it all,
he's been sitting there with the little ... twins (or wot?)
as they spill porridge so cutely with their little spoons,
this big ... happy oaf who's never had a toothache
has been sitting waiting the entrance of his elders
(Granny who must put in her teeth, and Papa who is worried
about the office, and Mama who isn't exactly straightened out
yet; and the young girl who loves with faith, anger and ...
purity) in they come
and he throws out an arm
and tilting his healthy ... carcass madly back in the chair
before the sun-pure kitchen curtains
and the little lovable, struggling bungling group
he says his great say,
and in the balloon above his head are the words
and by the twisted agony of the faces
I am led to believe something has been said,
but I read again
looking carefully at the great happy spewing oaf's face
the brown great deepness of the eyes
and the young girl's teeth pushed out sour as if she had
bitten into some lemon of truth,
but there is something wrong
there is some mistake
because the sheet of paper I hold
slants and angles in the electric light
into the open dizziness of my dome
and it huddles and curls itself into a puffy knot
and pushes at the back of my eyes
and pulls my nerves taut-thin from toe to hair-line
and I know then that
the great spewing oaf has said
nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing

nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing
nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing
and now,
on the rug
under the chair
I can see the comic section
folded in half,
I can see the black and white lines
and some faces I don't care to discern;
but a thin illness overcomes me
at the sight of this portion of paper
and I look away
and try not to think
that much of our living life
is true to the little paper faces
that stare up from our feet
and grin and jump and gesture,
to be wrapped in tomorrow's garbage
and thrown away.

2 flies

The flies are angry bits of
life;
why are they so angry?
it seems they want more,
it seems almost as if they
are angry
that they are flies;
it is not my fault;
I sit in the room
with them
and they taunt me
with their agony;
it is as if they were
loose chunks of soul
left out of somewhere;
I try to read a paper
but they will not let me
be;
one seems to go in half-circles
high along the wall,
throwing a miserable sound
upon my head;
the other one, the smaller one
stays near and teases my hand,
saying nothing,
rising, dropping
crawling near;
what god puts these
lost things upon me?
other men suffer dictates of
empire, tragic love ...
I suffer
insects ...
I wave at the little one
which only seems to revive
his impulse to challenge:
he circles swifter,
nearer, even making
a fly-sound,
and one above
catching a sense of the new
whirling, he too, in excitement,
speeds his flight,
drops down suddenly
in a cuff of noise

and they join
in circling my hand,
strumming the base
of the lampshade
until some man-thing
in me
will take no more
unholiness
and I strike
with the rolled-up paper---
missing!---
striking,
striking,
they break in discord,
some message lost between them,
and I get the big one
first, and he kicks on his back
flicking his legs
like an angry whore,
and I come down again
with my paper club
and he is a smear
of fly-ugliness;
the little one circles high
now, quiet and swift,
almost invisible;
he does not come near
my hand again;
he is tamed and
inaccessible; I leave
him be, he leaves me
be;
the paper, of course,
is ruined;
something has happened,
something has soiled my
day,
sometimes it does not
take a man
or a woman,
only something alive;
I sit and watch
the small one;
we are woven together
in the air
and the living;
it is late
for both of us.

through the streets of anywhere

of course it is nonsense to try to patch up an
old poem while drinking a warm beer
on a Sunday afternoon; it is better to simply
exist through the end of a cigarette;
the people are listless and although this is a
poor term of description
Gershwin is on the radio
banging and praying to get out;
I have read the newspapers,
carefully noting the suicides,
I have also carefully noted
the green of some tree
like a nature poet on his last cup,
and
bang bang
there they go outside;
new children, some of them getting ready
to sit here, and do as I am doing---
warm beer, dead Gershwin,
getting fat around the middle,
disbelieving the starving years,
Atlanta frozen like God's head
holding an apple in the window,
but we are all finally tricked and
slapped to death
like lovers' vows, bargained
out of any gain,
and the radio is finished
and the phone rings and a female says,
"I am free tonight;" well, she is not much
but I am not much either;
in adolescent fire I once thought I could ride
a horse through the streets of anywhere,
but they quickly shot this horse from under,
"Ya got cigarettes?" she asks. "Yes," I say,
"I got cigarettes." "Matches?" she asks.

"Enough matches to burn Rome." "Whiskey?"
"Enough whiskey for a Mississippi River
of pain." "You drunk?" "Not yet."
She'll be over: perfect: a fig
leaf and a small club, and
I look at the poem I am trying to work with:

I say that

the backalleys will arrive upon
the bloodyapes
as noon arrives upon the Salinas
fieldhands....

bullshit. I rip the page once, twice,
three times, then check for matches and
icecubes, hot and cold,
with some men their conversation is better than
their creation
and with other men
it's a woman
almost any woman
that is their Rodin among park benches;
bird down in road awaiting rats and wheels
I know that I have deserted you,
the icecubes pile like fool's gold
in the pitcher
and now they are playing
Alex Scriabin
which is a little better
but not much
for me.

fire station

(For Jane, with love)

we came out of the bar
because we were out of money
but we had a couple of wine bottles
in the room.

it was about 4 in the afternoon
and we passed a fire station
and she started to go
crazy:

"a FIRE STATION! oh, I just love
FIRE engines, they're so red and
all! let's go in !"

I followed her on
in. "FIRE ENGINES!" she screamed
wobbling her big
ass.

she was already trying to climb into
one, pulling her skirt up to her
waist, trying to jackknife up into the
seat.

"here, here, lemme help ya!" a fireman ran
up.

another fireman walked up to
me: "our citizens are always welcome,"
he told
me.

the other guy was up in the seat with
her. "you got one of those big THINGS?"

she asked him. "oh, hahaha!, I mean one of
those big HELMETS!"

"I've got a big helmet too," he told
her.

"oh, hahaha!"

"you play cards?" I asked my

fireman. I had 43 cents and nothing but time.

"come on in back," he said. "of course, we don't gamble. it's against the rules."

"I understand," I told him.

I had run my 43 cents up to a dollar ninety when I saw her going upstairs with her fireman.

"he's gonna show me their sleeping quarters," she told me.

"I understand," I told her.

when her fireman slid down the pole ten minutes later I nodded him over.

"that'll be 5 dollars."

"5 dollars for that?"

"we wouldn't want a scandal, would we? we both might lose our jobs. of course, I'm not working."

he gave me the 5.

"sit down, you might get it back."

"whatcha playing?"
"blackjack."

"gambling's against the law."

"anything interesting is. besides, you see any money on the table?"
he sat down.

that made 5 of us.

"how was it Harry?" somebody asked him.

"not bad, not bad."

the other guy went on upstairs.

they were bad players really. they didn't bother to memorize the deck. they didn't know whether the high numbers or low numbers were left. and basically they hit too high, didn't hold low enough.

when the other guy came down he gave me a five.

"how was it, Marty?"
"not bad. she's got ... some fine movements."

"hit me!" I said. "nice clean girl. I ride it myself."

nobody said anything.

"any big fires lately?" I asked.

"naw. nothin' much."

"you guys need
exercise. hit me
again!"

a big red-headed kid who had been shining an
engine
threw down his rag and
went upstairs.

when he came down he threw me a
five.

when the 4th guy came down I gave him
3 fives for a
twenty.

I don't know how many firemen
were in the building or where they
were. I figured a few had slipped by me
but I was a good
sport.

it was getting dark outside
when the alarm
rang.

they started running around.
guys came sliding down the
pole.

then she came sliding down the
pole. she was good with the
pole. a real woman. nothing but guts
and
ass.

"let's go," I told
her.

she stood there waving goodbye to the
firemen but they didn't seem
much interested
any more.

"let's go back to the
bar," I told
her.

"ooh, you got
money?"

"I found some I didn't know I
had ..."

we sat at the end of the bar
with whiskey and beer
chaser.

"I sure got a good
sleep."

"sure, baby, you need your
sleep."

"look at that sailor looking at me!
he must think I'm a ... a ..."

"naw, he don't think that. relax, you've got
class, real class. sometimes you remind me of an
opera singer. you know, one of those prima d's.
your class shows all over
you. drink
up."

I ordered 2
more.

"you know, daddy, you're the only man I
LOVE! I mean, really ... LOVE! ya
know?"

"sure I know. sometimes I think I am a king
in spite of myself."

"yeah. yeah. that's what I mean, somethin' like
that."

I had to go to the urinal. when I came back
the sailor was sitting in my
seat. she had her leg up against his and
he was talking.

I walked over and got in a dart game with
Harry the Horse and the corner
newsboy.

an argument over Marshal Foch

Foch was a great soldier, he said, Marshal Foch;
listen, I said, if you don't keep it clean
I'll have to slap you across the face with
a wet towel.

I'll write the governor, he said.
the governor is my uncle, I said.

Marshal Foch was my
grandfather, he said.

I warned you, I said. I'm a
gentleman.

And I'm a Foch, he said.
that did it. I slapped him with a wet towel.

he grabbed the phone.
governor's mansion, he said.

I slapped a wet rubber glove down
his mouth and cut the wire.

outside the crickets were chirping like
mad: Foch, Foch, Foch, Foch!
they chirped.

I got out my sub-machine gun and blasted
the devils
but there were so many of them
I had to give up.

I pulled the wet rubber glove out.
I surrender, I said, it's too much:
I can't change the world.

all the so-called ladies in the room
applauded.

he stood up and bowed gallantly as
outside the crickets chirped.

I put on my hat
and stalked out. I still maintain
the French are weak

and no
wonder.

40 cigarettes

I smoked 2 packs of cigarettes today and
my tongue feels like a
caterpillar trying to get out for
rainwater
somebody is working over
Pictures at an Exhibition
while tiny pimples of sweat
work their way down my
fat sides.
too sick today and told the man
over the phone
it was stomach pains.
the pains in the ass too and
the soul?
the gophers are underground
staring at pictures on mudwalls
machineguns are mounted in the
windows.
40 cigarettes.
what's walking around
chewing grass,
4 legs, no
hands?
it's not the
politburo.
it could be a
donkey. how'd you like to be in a
donkey's head for a
while? your body in a donkey's
body? you'd only last
ten minutes
they'd have to let you
out
you'd be so
scared
but who's going to
let you out of that
dismal bluepurple notion
of what you are
now? and I'm the one who's
scared.

a killer gets ready

he was a good one
say 18, 19,
a marine
and everytime
a woman came down the train aisle
he seemed to stand up
so I couldn't see
her
and the woman smiled at him

but I didn't smile
at him

he kept looking at himself in the
train window
and standing up and taking off his
coat and then standing up
and putting it back
on

he polished his belt buckle with a
delighted vigor

and his neck was red and
his face was red and his eyes were a
pretty blue

but I didn't like
him

and everytime I went to the can
he was either in one of the cans
or he was in front of one of the mirrors
combing his hair or
shaving
and he was always walking up and down the
aisles
or drinking water
I watched his Adam's apple juggle the water
down

he was always in my
eyes

but we never spoke

and I remembered all the other trains
all the other buses
all the other wars

he got off at Pasadena
vainer than any woman
he got off at Pasadena
proud and
dead

the rest of the trainride---
8 or 10 miles---
was perfect.

I love you

I opened the door of this shanty and there she lay
there she lay
my love
across the back of a man in a dirty undershirt.
I was rough tough easy-with-money-Charley (that's me)
and I awakened both of them
like God
and when she was awake
she started screaming, "Hank, Hank!" (that's my other name)
"take me away from this son of a bitch!"
I hate him I love you!"

of course, I was wise enough not to believe any of
this and I sat down and said,
"I need a drink, my head hurts and I need a
drink."

this is the way love works, you see, and then we all sat there
drinking the whiskey and I was
perfectly satisfied
and then he reached over and handed me a five,
"that's all that's left of what she took, that's all that's left
of what she took from you."

I was no golden-winged angel ripped up through
boxtops
I took the five and left them in there
and I walked up the alley
to Alvarado street
and I turned in left
at the first
bar.

a little atomic bomb

o, just give me a little atomic bomb
not too much
just a little
enough to kill a horse in the street
but there aren't any horses in the street

well, enough to knock the flowers from a bowl
but I don't see any
flowers in a
bowl

enough then
to frighten my love
but I don't have any
love

well
give me an atomic bomb then
to scrub in my bathtub
like a dirty and lovable child

(I've got a bathtub)

just a little atomic bomb, general,
with pugnose
pink ears
smelling like underclothes in
July

do you think I'm crazy?
I think you're crazy
too
so the way you think:
send me one before somebody else
does.

the egg

he's 17.

mother, he said, how do I crack an egg?

all right, she said to me, you don't have to sit there looking like that.

oh, mother, he said, you broke the yoke.
I can't eat a broken yoke.

all right, she said to me, you're so tough, you've been in the slaughterhouses, factories, the jails, you're so god damned tough, but all people don't have to be like you, that doesn't make everybody else wrong and you right.

mother, he said, can you bring me some cokes when you come home from work?

look, Raleigh, she said, can't you get the cokes on your bike, I'm tired after work.

but, mama, there's a hill.

what hill, Raleigh?

there's a hill,
it's there and I have to peddle over it.

all right, she said to me, you think you're so god damned tough. you worked on a railroad track gang, I hear about it every time you get drunk: "I worked on a railroad track gang."

well, I said, I did.

I mean, what difference does it make?
everybody has to work somewhere.

mama, said the kid, will you bring me those cokes?

I really like the kid. I think he's very
gentle. and once he learns how to crack an
egg he may do some
unusual things. meanwhile
I sleep with his mother
and try to stay out of
arguments.

the knifer

you knifed me, he said, you told Pink Eagle
not to publish me.
oh hell, Manny, I said, get off it.

these poets are very sensitive
they have more sensitivity than talent,
I don't know what to do with them.

just tonight the phone rang and
it was Bagatelli and Bagatelli said
Clarsten phoned and Clarsten was pissed
because we hadn't mailed him the
anthology, and Clarsten blamed me
for not mailing the anthology
and furthermore Clarsten
claimed I was trying to do him
in, and he was very
angry. so said
Bagatelli.

you know, I'm really beginning to feel like
a literary power
I just lean back in my chair and roll cigarettes
and stare at the walls
and I am given credit for the life and death of
poetic careers.
at least I'm given credit for the
death part.

actually these boys are dying off without my
help. The sun has gone behind the cloud.
I have nothing to do with the workings.
I smoke Prince Albert, drink Schlitz
and copulate whenever possible. believe in my
innocence and I might consider
yours.

the ladies of summer

the ladies of summer will die like the rose
and the lie

the ladies of summer will love
so long as the price is not
forever

the ladies of summer
might love anybody;
they might even love you
as long as summer
lasts

yet winter will come to them
too

white snow and
a cold freezing
and faces so ugly
that even death
will turn away---
wince---
before taking
them.

I'm in love

she's young, she said,
but look at me,
I have pretty ankles,
and look at my wrists, I have pretty
wrists
o my god,
I thought it was all working,
and now it's her again,
every time she phones you go crazy,
you told me it was over
you told me it was finished,
listen, I've lived long enough to become a
good woman,
why do you need a bad woman?
you need to be tortured, don't you?
you think life is rotten if somebody treats you
rotten it all fits,
doesn't it?
tell me, is that it? do you want to be treated like a
piece of shit?
and my son, my son was going to meet you.
I told my son
and I dropped all my lovers.
I stood up in a cafe and screamed
I'M IN LOVE,
and now you've made a fool of me ...

I'm sorry, I said, I'm really sorry.

hold me, she said, will you please hold me?

I've never been in one of these things before, I said,
these triangles ...

she got up and lit a cigarette, she was trembling all
over. she paced up and down, wild and crazy. she had
a small body. her arms were thin, very thin and when
she screamed and started beating me I held her
wrists and then I got it through the eyes: hatred,
centuries deep and true. I was wrong and graceless and
sick. all the things I had learned had been wasted.
there was no living creature as foul as I
and all my poems were
false.

the apple

this is not just an apple
this is an experience
red green yellow
with underlying pits of white
wet with cold water
I bite into it
christ, a white doorway ...

another bite
chewing
while thinking of an old witch
choking to death on an apple skin---
a childhood story.

I bite deeply
chew and swallow

there is a feeling of waterfalls
and endlessness

there is a mixture of electricity and
hope.

yet now
halfway through the apple
some depressive feelings begin

it's ending
I'm working toward the core
afraid of seeds and stems

there's a funeral march beginning in Venice,
a dark old man has died after a lifetime of pain

I throw away the apple early
as a girl in a white dress walks by my window

followed by a boy half her size
in blue pants and striped
shirt

I leave off a small belch
and stare at a dirty
ashtray.

the violin player

he was in the upper grandstand
at the end
where they made their stretch moves
after coming off the curve.

he was a small man
pink, bald, fat
in his 60's.

he was playing a violin
he was playing classical music on
his violin
and the horseplayers ignored him.

Banker Agent won the first race
and he played his violin.

Can Fly won the 3rd race and
he continued to play his violin.

I went to get a coffee and when I came back
he was still playing, and he was still playing
after Boomerang won the 4th.

nobody stopped him
nobody asked him what he was doing
nobody applauded.

after Pawee won the 5th
he continued
the music falling over the edge of the
grandstand and into the
wind and sun.

Stars and Stripes won the 6th
and he played some more
and Staunch Hope got up on the inside
to take the 7th
and the violin player worked away
and when Lucky Mike won at 4 to 5 in the 8th
he was still making music.

after Dumpty's Goddess took the last
and they began their long slow walk to their cars
beaten and broke again

the violin player continued
sending his music after them
and I sat there listening
we were both alone up there and
when he finished I applauded.
the violin player stood up
faced me and bowed.
then he put his fiddle in the case
got up and walked down the stairway.

I allowed him a few minutes
and then I got up
and began the long slow walk to my car.
it was getting into evening.

5 dollars

I am dying of sadness and alcohol
he said to me over the bottle
on a soft Thursday afternoon
in an old hotel room by the train depot.

I have, he went on, betrayed myself with
belief, deluded myself with love
tricked myself with sex.

the bottle is damned faithful, he said,
the bottle will not lie.

meat is cut as roses are cut
men die as dogs die
love dies like dogs die,
he said.

listen, Ronny, I said,
lend me 5 dollars.

love needs too much help, he said.
hate takes care of itself.

just 5 dollars, Ronny.

hate contains truth. beauty is a facade.

I'll pay you back in a week.

stick with the thorn
stick with the bottle
stick with the voices of old men in hotel rooms.

I ain't had a decent meal, Ronny, for a
couple of days.

stick with the laughter and horror of death.
keep the butterfat out.
get lean, get ready.

something in my gut, Ronny, I'll be able
to face it.

to die alone and ready and unsurprised,
that's the trick.

Ronny, listen---

that majestic weeping you hear
will not be for
us.

I suppose not, Ronny.

the lies of centuries, the lies of love,
the lies of Socrates and Blake and Christ
will be your bedmates and tombstones
in a death that will never end.

Ronny, my poems came back from the
New York Quarterly.

that is why they weep,
without knowing.

is that what all that noise is, I said,
my god shit.

cooperation

she means well.
play the piano
she says
it's not good for you
not to write.

she's going for a walk
on the island
or a boatride.
I believe she's taken a modern novel
and her reading glasses.

I sit at the window
with her electric typewriter
and watch young girls' asses
which are attached to
young girls.

the final decadence.

I have 20 published books
and 6 cans of beer.

the tourists bob up and down in the water
the tourists walk and talk and take
photographs and
drink soft drinks.

it's not good for me not to
write.
she's in a boat now, a
sightseeing tour
and she's thinking, looking
at the waves---
"it's 2:30 p.m.
he must be writing
it's not good for him not to write.
tonight there will be other things to do.
I hope he doesn't drink
too much beer. he's a much better
lover than Robert was
and the sea is beautiful."

the night I was going to die

the night I was going to die
I was sweating on the bed
and I could hear the crickets
and there was a cat fight outside
and I could feel my soul dropping down through the
mattress
and just before it hit the floor I jumped up
I was almost too weak to walk
but I walked around and turned on all the lights
then made it back to the bed
and again my soul dropped down through the mattress
and I leaped up
just before it hit the floor
I walked around and I turned on all the lights
and then I went back to bed
and down it dropped again and
I was up
turning on all the lights

I had a 7 year old daughter
and I felt sure she didn't want me dead
otherwise it wouldn't have
mattered

but all that night
nobody phoned
nobody came by with a beer
my girlfriend didn't phone
all I could hear were the crickets and it was
hot
and I kept working at it
getting up and down
until the first of the sun came through the window
through the bushes
and then I got on the bed
and the soul stayed
inside at last and
I slept.
now people come by
eating on the doors and windows
the phone rings
the phone rings again and again
I get great letters in the mail
hate letters and love letters.
everything is the same again.

2347 Duane

there's this blue baby and she's sucking a
blue breast under a green vine that has
grown from the ceiling,
and further to the right
there's a light brown girl
against a dark brown background
and she's leaning out over a chair looking
pensive, I suppose.
my cigarette just went out
there are never any matches around here
and I get up and go into the kitchen
and light it on a 30 year old stove.
I get back without accident.
now behind me on a pink chair
is a large old-fashioned shears.
it is 15 minutes past midnight
and the hook is on the door
and over the tall twisted lamp by the bed
is a red floppy hat that is used as a lampshade
and a small dog growls at the tall cold sky outside.
there are two mattresses on the floor
and I have slept on one of those mattresses
many nights.
they say they are going to bulldoze this place
which is owned by a Japanese wrestler called Fuji.
I don't see how it can be replaced with anything better.

she fixed the bathtub faucet and the faucet in the sink
tonight. she can't roll a cigarette but she keeps the
plumbing bills down.
we ate some Col. Sanders chicken with coleslaw, mashed spuds,
gravy and biscuits.
it's 23 minutes past midnight
and they are going to bulldoze this place,
I don't mean tomorrow, I mean soon,
and the small dog growls at the sky again
and my cigarette is out again;
the love on that one mattress near the door,
the sex and the arguments and the dreams and the
conversations,
that bulldozer is going to come up missing there,
and even when it knocks down the trees and the crapper
and eats holes in the dirt driveway
it's not going to get it all,
and when I drive by in 6 months and see the highrise

filled with 50 people with good stable incomes,
I will still remember the blue baby sucking the blue breast,
the vine through the roof, the brown girl,
the leaky faucets, the spiders and the termites,
the grey and yellow paint, the tablecloth over the front
window, and that mattress near the door.

a radio with guts

it was on the 2nd floor on Coronado Street
I used to get drunk
and throw the radio through the window
while it was playing, and, of course,
it would break the glass in the window
and the radio would sit out there on the roof
still playing
and I'd tell my woman,
"Ah, what a marvelous radio!"

the next morning I'd take the window
off the hinges
and carry it down the street
to the glass man
who would put in another pane.

I kept throwing that radio through the window
each time I got drunk
and it would sit out there on the roof
still playing---
a magic radio
a radio with guts,
and each morning I'd take the window
back to the glass man.

I don't remember how it ended exactly
though I do remember
we finally moved out.
there was a woman downstairs who worked in
the garden in her bathing suit
and her husband complained he couldn't sleep nights
because of me
so we moved out
and in the next place
I either forgot to throw the radio out the window
or I didn't feel like it
anymore.

I do remember missing the woman who worked in the
garden in her bathing suit,
she really dug with that trowel
and she put her behind up in the air
and I used to sit in the window
and watch the sun shine all over that thing

while the music played.

Solid State Marty

he's almost 80 and they went to
visit him the other
day. he was sitting in his chair
with a burlap rug over his
lap
and when they walked in
the first thing he said was
"Don't touch my cock!"

he had a gallon jug of
zinfandel in his
refrigerator, had just gotten off
of
5 days of
tequila.

a new \$600 piano was in the center of
the room,
he'd bought it for his
son.

he's always phoning for me to come over
but when I do
he's very dull. he agrees with
everything I say and
then he goes to
sleep.

Solid State Marty.
when I'm not there
he does everything:
sets fire to the couch
pisses on his belly
sings the National Anthem.

he gets call girls over and
squirts them with
seltzer water, he
rips the telephone wire out
of the wall

but before he does
he telephones
Paris
Madrid

Tokyo

he beats dogs
cats
people
with his
silver crutch

he tells stories about
how he was a
matador
a boxer
a pimp
a friend of Ernie's
a friend of Picasso

but when I come over
he goes to sleep
upright in his chair
grey hair rumbling down over
the silent
dumb hawk face

his son starts talking
and then it's time
for me
to go.

interviews

young men from the underground
newspapers and the small circulation
magazines come
more and more often
to interview me---
their hair is long
they are thin
have tape recorders and
arrive with
much beer.
most
of them
manage to stay some hours and
get intoxicated.

if one of my girlfriends is around
I get her to do the
talking.
go ahead, I say, tell them the
truth about me.

then they tell what they think is
the truth.

they paint me to resemble the
idiot
which is true.

then I'm questioned:

why did you stop writing for ten
years?

I don't know.

how come you didn't get into the
army?

crazy.

can you speak German?

no.

who are your favorite modern

writers?

I don't know.

I seldom see the
interviews. although once one of
the young men wrote back that
my girlfriend had
kissed him
when I was in the bathroom.

you got off easy, I wrote back
and by the way
forget that shit I told you about
Dos Passos. or was it
Mailer? it's hot tonight
and half the neighborhood is
drunk. the other half is
dead.
if I have any advice about writing
poetry, it's---
don't. I'm going to send out for
some fried chicken.

buk

face of a political candidate on a street billboard

there he is:

not too many hangovers

not too many fights with women

not too many flat tires

never a thought of suicide

not more than three toothaches

never missed a meal

never in jail

never in love

7 pairs of shoes

a son in college

a car one year old

insurance policies

a very green lawn

garbage cans with tight lids

he'll be elected.

Yankee Doodle

I was young
no stomach
arms of wire
but strong

I arrived drunk at the factory
every morning
and out-worked the whole pack of them
without strain

the old guy
his name was Sully
good old Irish Sully
he fumbled with screws

and whistled the same song all day
long:

Yankee Doodle came to town
Ridin' on a pony
He stuck a feather in his hat
And called it macaroni ...

they say he had been whistling that song
for years

I began whistling right along
with him

we whistled together for hours
him counting screws
me packing 8 foot long light fixtures into
coffin boxes

as the days went on
he began to pale and tremble
he'd miss a note now and then

I whistled on

he began to miss days

then he missed a week

next I knew

the word got out
Sully was in a hospital for an
operation

2 weeks later he came in with a cane
and his wife

he shook hands with everybody

a 40 year man

when they had the retirement party for him
I missed it
because of a terrible
hangover

after he was gone
oddly
I kept looking for him,
and I realized that he had
never hated me, that I
had only hated
him
I began drinking more
missing more days

then they let me go
too
I've never minded getting
fired but that was the one time
I felt it.

blue moon, oh bleweeww moooooon how I adore you!

I care for you, darling, I love you,
the only reason I fucked L. is because you fucked
Z. and then I fucked R. and you fucked N.
and because you fucked N. I had to fuck
Y. But I think of you constantly, I feel you
here in my belly like a baby, love I'd call it,
no matter what happens I'd call it love, and so
you fucked C. and then before I could move
you fucked W., so then I had to fuck D. But
I want you to know that I love you, I think of you
constantly, I don't think I've ever loved anybody
like I love you.

bow wow bow wow wow
bow wow bow wow wow.

nothing is as effective as defeat

always carry a notebook with you
wherever you go, he said,
and don't drink too much, drinking dulls
the sensibilities,
attend readings, note breath pauses,
and when you read
always understate
underplay, the crowd is smarter than you
might think,
and when you write something
don't send it out right away,
put it in a drawer for two weeks,
then take it out and look
at it, and revise, revise,
REVISE again and again,
tighten lines like bolts holding the span
of a 5 mile bridge,
and keep a notebook by your bed,
you will get thoughts during the night
and these thoughts will vanish and be wasted
unless you notate them.
and don't drink, any fool can
drink, we are men of
letters.

for a guy who couldn't write at all
he was about like the rest
of them: he could sure
talk about
it.

success

I had a most difficult job
starting my 14 year old car today
in 100 degree heat
I had to take the carburetor off
leap back and forth
adjusting the set-screw,
a 2 by 4 jammed against the gas pedal
to hold it down.

I got it going---after 45 minutes---
I mailed 4 letters
purchased something cool
came back
got into my place
and listened to Ives
had dreams of empire
my great white belly against
the fan.

Africa, Paris, Greece

there are these 2 women
I know who are
quite similar

almost the same
age
well-read
literary

I once slept with both of
them
but that's all
over

we're friends

they've been to Africa
Paris
Greece

here and there

fucked some famous men

one is now living with a
millionaire
some few miles
from here
goes to breakfast and
dinner with him
feeds his fish his cats and
his dog
when she gets drunk she phones
me

the other is having it
more difficult living
alone in a small apartment in
Venice (Calif.)
listening to the bongo
drums

famous men seem to want
young women

a young woman is easier
to get rid
of: they have more
places to
go

it is difficult for women who
were once beautiful
to get
old

they have to become more
intelligent (if they want to
hold their men) and do
more things
in bed and out of
bed

these 2 women I know
they're good both
in and out of
bed

and they're intelligent
intelligent enough to know
they can't come see me
and stay
more than an
hour or two
they are quite
similar

and I know
if they read this poem
they'll understand
it
just as well as they
understand
Rimbaud or Rilke

or Keats

meanwhile I have met a
young blonde from the
Fairfax district

as she looks at my paintings
on the walls

I rub the bottoms of
her feet.

the drunk tank judge

the drunk tank judge is
late like any other
judge and he is
young
well-fed
educated
spoiled and
from a good
family.

we drunks put out our cigarettes and await his
mercy.

those who couldn't make bail are
first. "guilty," they say, they all say,
"guilty."
"7 days." "14 days." "14 days and then you will be
released to the Honor Farm." "4 days." "7days."
"14 days."

"judge, these guys beat hell out of a man
in there."

"next."

"judge, they really beat hell out of me."

"next case, please."

"7 days." "14 days and then you will be released to the
Honor Farm."

the drunk tank judge is
young and
overfed. he has
eaten too many meals. he is
fat.

the bail-out drunks are
next. they put us in long lines and
he takes us
quickly. "2 days or 40 dollars." "2 days or 40
dollars." "2 days or 40 dollars." "2 days or
40 dollars."

there are 35 or
40 of us.
the courthouse is on San Fernando Road among the
junkyards.

when we go to the bailiff he
tells us,
"your bail will apply."

"what?"

"your bail will apply."

the bail is \$50. the court keeps the
ten.

we walk outside and get into our
old automobiles.
most of our automobiles look worse than
the ones in the
junkyards. some of us
don't have any
automobiles. most of us are
Mexicans and poor whites.
the trainyards are across the
street. the sun is up
good.

the judge has very
smooth
delicate
skin. the judge has
fat
jowls.

we walk and we drive away from the
courthouse.

justice.

claws of paradise

wooden butterfly
baking soda smile
sawdust fly---
I love my belly
and the liquor store man
calls me,
"Mr. Schlitz."
the cashiers at the race track
scream,
"THE POET KNOWS!"
when I cash my tickets.
the ladies
in and out of bed
say they love me
as I walk by with wet
white feet.

albatross with drunken eyes
Popeye's dirt-stained shorts
bedbugs of Paris,
I have cleared the barricades
have mastered the
automobile
the hangover
the tears
but I know
the final doom
like any schoolboy viewing
the cat being crushed
by passing traffic.

my skull has an inch and a
half crack right at the
dome.
most of my teeth are
in front. I get
dizzy spells in supermarkets
spit blood when I drink
whiskey
and become saddened to
the point of
grief
when I think of all the
good women I have known
who have

dissolved
vanished
over trivialities:
trips to Pasadena,
children's picnics,
toothpaste caps down
the drain.

there is nothing to do
but drink
play the horse
bet on the poem

as the young girls
become women
and the machineguns
point toward me
crouched
behind walls thinner
than eyelids.

there's no defense
except all the errors
made.

meanwhile
I take showers
answer the phone
boil eggs
study motion and waste
and feel as good
as the next while
walking in the sun.

the loner

16 and one-half inch
neck
68 years old
lifts weights
body like a young
boy (almost)

kept his head
shaved
and drank port wine
from half-gallon jugs

kept the chain on the
door
windows boarded

you had to give
a special knock
to get in

he had brass knucks
knives
clubs
guns

he had a chest like a
wrestler
never lost his
glasses

never swore
never looked for
trouble

never married after the death
of his only
wife

hated
cats
roaches
mice
humans

worked crossword

puzzles
kept up with the
news

that 16 and one-half inch
neck

for 68 he was
something

all those boards
across the windows

washed his own underwear
and socks

my friend Red took me up
to meet him
one night

we talked a while
together

then we left

Red asked, "what do you
think?"

I answered, "more afraid to die
than the rest of us."

I haven't seen either of them
since.

the sandwich

I walked down the street for a submarine
sandwich
and this guy pulled out of the driveway
of The Institute of Sexual Education
and almost ran over my toes
with his bike;
he had a black dirty beard
eyes like a Russian pianist
and the breath of an East Kansas City whore;
it irritated me to be almost murdered by a
fool in a sequin jacket;
I looked upstairs and the girls sat in their chairs
outside their doors
dreaming old Greta Garbo movies;
I put a half a buck into one of the paper racks
and got the latest sex paper;
then I went into the sandwich shop
and ordered the submarine
and a large coffee.
they were all sitting in there talking about
how to lose weight.
I asked for a sideorder of
french fries.
the girls in the sex paper ads
looked like girls in sex paper ads.
they told me not to be lonely
that they could fix me up:
I could beat them with chains or whips
or they could beat me
with chains or whips, whichever way
I wanted it.
I finished, paid up, left a tip,
left the sex paper on the seat.
then I walked back up Western Avenue
with my belly hanging out over
my belt.

the happy life of the tired

neatly in tune with
the song of a fish
I stand in the kitchen
halfway to madness
dreaming of Hemingway's
Spain.
it's muggy, like they say,
I can't breathe,
have crapped and
read the sports pages,
opened the refrigerator
looked at a piece of purple
meat,
tossed it back
in.

the place to find the center
is at the edge
that pounding in the sky
is just a water pipe
vibrating.

terrible things inch in the
walls; cancer flowers grow
on the porch; my white cat has
one eye torn
away and there are only 7 days
of racing left in the
summer meet.

the dancer never arrived from the
Club Normandy
and Jimmy didn't bring the
hooker,
but there's a postcard from
Arkansas
and a throwaway from Food King:
10 free vacations to Hawaii,
all I got to do is
fill out the form.
but I don't want to go to
Hawaii.

I want the hooker with the pelican eyes
brass belly-button

and
ivory heart.

I take out the piece of purple
meat
drop it into the
pan.

then the phone rings.

I fall to one knee and roll under the
table. I remain there
until it
stops.

then I get up and
turn on the
radio.
no wonder Hemingway was a
drunk, Spain be damned,
I can't stand it
either.

it's so
muggy.

the proud thin dying

I see old people on pensions in the
supermarkets and they are thin and they are
proud and they are dying
they are starving on their feet and saying
nothing. long ago, among other lies,
they were taught that silence was
bravery. now, having worked a lifetime,
inflation has trapped them. they look around
steal a grape
chew on it. finally they make a tiny
purchase, a day's worth.
another lie they were taught:
thou shalt not steal.
they'd rather starve than steal
(one grape won't save them)
and in tiny rooms
while reading the market ads
they'll starve
they'll die without a sound
pulled out of roominghouses
by young blond boys with long hair
who'll slide them in
and pull away from the curb, these
boys
handsome of eye
thinking of Vegas and pussy and
victory.
it's the order of things: each one
gets a taste of honey
then the knife.

under

I can't pick anything up
off the floor---
old socks
shorts
shirts
newspapers
letters
8 spoons bottles beercaps

can't make the bed
hang up the toilet paper
brush my teeth
comb my hair
dress

I stay on the bed
naked
on the soiled sheets
which are half on the
floor
the buttons on the mattress
press into my
back

when the phone rings
when somebody comes to the door
I anger

I'm like a bug under a rock
with that fear too

I stay in bed
notice the mirror on the dresser

it is a victory to scratch
myself.

hot month

got 3 women coming down in
July, maybe more
they want to suck my blood-
vibes

do I have enough
clean towels?

I told them that I was feeling
bad
(I didn't expect all these
mothers
arriving with their tits
distended)

you see
I am too good
with the drunken letter
and the drunken phonecall
screaming for love
when I probably don't
have it

I am going out to buy more
towels
bedsheets
Alka-Seltzer
washrags
mop handles
mops
swords
knives
bombs
vaseline flowers of yearning
the works of
De Sade.

maybe tomorrow

looked like

 Bogart

sunken cheeks

chain smoker

pissed out of windows

ignored women

snarled at landlords

rode boxcars through the badlands

never missed a chance to duke it

full of roominghouse and skidrow stories

ribs showing

flat belly

walking in shoes with nails driving into his heels

looking out of windows

cigar in mouth

lips wet with beer

 Bogart's

got a beard now

he's much older

but don't believe the gossip:

 Bogie's not dead

yet.

junk

sitting in a dark bedroom with 3 junkies,
female.

brown paper bags filled with trash are
everywhere.

it is one-thirty in the afternoon.

they talk about madhouses,
hospitals.

they are waiting for a fix.

none of them work.

it's relief and foodstamps and
Medi-Cal.

men are usable objects
toward the fix.

it is one-thirty in the afternoon
and outside small plants grow.
their children are still in school.
the females smoke cigarettes
and suck listlessly on beer and
tequila
which I have purchased.

I sit with them.

I wait on my fix:

I am a poetry junkie.

they pulled Ezra through the streets
in a wooden cage.

Blake was sure of God.

Villon was a mugger.

Lorca sucked cock.

T. S. Eliot worked a teller's cage.

most poets are swans,
egrets.

I sit with 3 junkies
at one-thirty in the afternoon.

the smoke pisses upward.

I wait.

death is a nothing jumbo.

one of the females says that she likes
my yellow shirt.

I believe in a simple violence.

this is
some of it.

8 rooms

my dentist is a drunk.
he rushes into the room while I'm
having my teeth cleaned:
"hey, you old fuck! you still
writing dirty stories?"
"yes."
he looks at the nurse:
"me and this old fuck, we both used
to work for the post office down at
the terminal annex!"
the nurse doesn't answer.
"look at us now! I we got out of
there; we got out of that place,
didn't we?"
"yes, yes ..."
he runs off into another room.
he hires beautiful young girls,
they are everywhere.
they work a 4 day week and he drives
a yellow Caddy.
he has 8 rooms besides the waiting
room, all equipped.
the nurse presses her body against
mine. it's unbelievable
her breasts, her thighs, her body
press against me. she picks at my teeth
and looks into my eyes:
"am I hurting you?"
"no no, go ahead!"

in 15 minutes the dentist is back:
"hey, don't take too long!
what's going on, anyhow?"
"Dr., this man hasn't had his teeth
cleaned for 5 years. they're filthy!"
"all right, finish him off! give him
another appointment!"
he runs out.
"would you like another appointment?"
she looks into my eyes.
"yes," I tell her.
she lets her body fall full against mine
and gives me a few last scrapes.
the whole thing only costs me forty dollars
including x-rays.

but she never told me her
name.

I liked him

I liked D. H. Lawrence
he could get so indignant
he snapped and he ripped
with wonderfully energetic sentences
he could lay the word down
bright and writhing
there was the stink of blood and murder
and sacrifice about him
the only tenderness he allowed
was when he bedded down his large German
wife.

I liked D. H. Lawrence---
he could talk about Christ
like he was the man next door
and he could describe Australian taxi drivers
so well you hated them
I liked D. H. Lawrence
but I'm glad I never met him
in some bistro
him lifting his tiny hot cup of
tea
and looking at me
with his worm-hole eyes.

the killer smiles

the old girl friends still phone
some from last year
some from the year before
some from the years before that.
it's good to have things done with
when they don't work
it's also good not to hate
or even forget
the person you've failed
with.

and I like it when they tell me
they are having luck with a man
luck with their life.

after surviving me
they have many joys due them.
I make their lives seem better
after me.

now I have given them
comparisons
new horizons
new cocks
more peace
a good future
without me.

I always hang up,
justified.

horse and fist

boxing matches and the racetracks
are where the guts are extracted and
rubbed into the cement
into the substance and stink of
being.

there is no peace either for the
flower or the tiger.
that's obvious.

what is not obvious are the rules.
there are no rules.

some attempt to find rules in the teachings of
others
and adjust to that
sight.

for me
obedience to another is the decay
of self.

for though every being is similar
each being is different

and to herd our differences
under one law
degrades each
self.

the boxing matches and the racetracks are
temples of learning

as the same horse and the same man
do not always win or lose
for the same reason

so does learning
sometimes
stand still
pause or
reverse itself.

there are very very

few
guidelines.

no rules
but a hint:

watch for the lead right
and the last flash of the
tote.

close encounters of another kind

are we going to the movies or not?
she asked him.

all right, he said, let's go.

I'm not going to put any panties on
so you can finger-fuck me in the
dark, she said.

should we get buttered popcorn?
he asked.

sure, she said.

leave your panties on,
he said.

what is it? she asked.

I just want to watch the movie,
he answered.

look, she said, I could go out on
the street, there are a hundred men
out there who'd be delighted to have
me.

all right, he said, go ahead out there.
I'll stay home and read the National
Enquirer.

you son of a bitch, she said, I am
trying to build a meaningful
relationship.

you can't build it with a hammer,
he said.

are we going to the movies or not?
she asked.

all right, he said, let's
go ...

at the corner of Western and

Franklin he put on the blinker
to make his left turn
and a man in the on-coming lane
speeded-up
as if to cut him off.

brakes grabbed. there wasn't a
crash but there almost was one.

he cursed at the man in the other
car. the man cursed back. the
man had another person in the car with
him. it was his wife.

they were going to the movies
too.

mermaid

I had to come to the bathroom for something
and I knocked
and you were in the tub
you had washed your face and your hair
and I saw your upper body
and except for the breasts
you looked like a girl of 5, of 8
you were gently gleeful in the water
Linda Lee.
you were not only the essence of that
moment
but of all my moments
up to then
you bathing easily in the ivory
yet there was nothing
I could tell you.

I got what I wanted in the bathroom
something
and I left.

hug the dark

turmoil is the god
madness is the god

permanent living peace is
permanent living death.

agony can kill
or
agony can sustain life
but peace is always horrifying
peace is the worst thing
walking
talking
smiling,
seeming to be.

don't forget the sidewalks
the whores,
betrayal,
the worm in the apple,
the bars, the jails,
the suicides of lovers.

here in America
we have assassinated a president and his brother,
another president has quit office.

people who believe in politics
are like people who believe in god:
they are sucking wind through bent
straws.

there is no god
there are no politics
there is no peace
there is no love
there is no control
there is no plan

stay away from god
remain disturbed

slide.

59 cents a pound

I like to prowl ordinary places
and taste the people---
from a distance.

I don't want them too near
because that's when attrition
starts.

but in supermarkets
laundromats
cafés

street corners

bus stops

eating places

drug stores

I can look at their bodies
and their faces

and their clothing---

watch the way they walk
or stand

or what they are doing.

I'm like an x-ray machine

I like them like that:

on view.

I imagine the best things
about them.

I imagine them brave and crazy

I imagine them beautiful.

I like to prowl the ordinary places.
I feel sorry for us all or glad for us
all

caught alive together
and awkward in that way.

there's nothing better than the joke
of us
the seriousness of us
the dullness of us

buying stockings and carrots and gum
and magazines
buying birth control
candy
hair spray
and toilet paper.

we should build a great bonfire
we should congratulate ourselves on our
endurance

we stand in long lines
we walk about
we wait.

I like to prowls ordinary places
the people explain themselves to me
and I to them

a woman at 3:35 p.m.
weighing purple grapes on a scale
looking at that scale very
seriously
she is dressed in a simple green dress
with a pattern of white flowers
she takes the grapes
puts them carefully into a white paper
bag.

that's lightning enough

the generals and the doctors may kill us
but we have
won.

promenade

each night
well, almost every night
early in the evening
I see the old man
and his small black and white dog.
it's dark on these streets
and no matter how often he has seen me
he always gives me
a look that is frightened
and yet bold---
bold because his small brittle dog is
with him.
he wears old clothing
a wrinkled cap
cotton gloves
large square-toed shoes.
we never speak.
he is my age but I feel younger.
I neither like nor dislike the man and his
dog.
I have never seen either of them
defecate but I know that they
must.
he and his dog give me a feeling of
peace.
they belong
like the street signs
the lawns
the yellow windows
the sidewalks
the sirens and the telephone
wires.
the driveways
the parked cars
the moon when there is a
moon.

metamorphosis

a girlfriend came in
built me a bed
scrubbed and waxed the kitchen floor
scrubbed the walls
vacuumed
cleaned the toilet
the bathtub
scrubbed the bathroom floor
and cut my toenails and
my hair.

then
all on the same day
the plumber came and fixed the kitchen faucet
and the toilet
and the gas man fixed the heater
and the phone man fixed the phone.
now I sit here in all this perfection.
it is quiet.
I have broken off with all 3 of my girlfriends.

I felt better when everything was in
disorder.
it will take me some months to get back to
normal:
I can't even find a roach to commune with.

I have lost my rhythm.
I can't sleep.
I can't eat.

I have been robbed of
my filth.

we'll take them

those lobsters
those 2 lobsters ...
yes, those bastards there.
we'll take them ...

so pink-red.

they say if you put them
in warm water first
they'll sleep
and when you boil them
they won't feel it.

how can we know?

no matter the burning tanks outside
Stalingrad
no matter that Hitler was a
vegetarian
no matter that the house I was born in
is now a brothel
in Andernach
no matter that my Uncle Heinrich
aged 92 and living in that same town
dislikes my novels and short stories.

we'll take those 2
bastards there

flowers of the sea.

dow average down

when you
first meet them their eyes
are all under-
standing; laughter abounds
like sand fleas. then, Je-
sus, time tinkles on and
things leak. they
start making DEMANDS.
what they
demand is contrary to what-
ever you are, or could be.
strange is the
thought that they've never
read anything you've writ-
ten, not really read it at
all. or worse, if they have,
they've come to SAVE
you. which mainly means
making you like everybody
else. meanwhile they've sucked
you up and wound you tight
in a million webs, and
being something of a
feeling person you can't
help but remember the
good parts or the parts
that seemed to be good.

you find yourself
alone again in your
bedroom grabbing your
guts and saying, o, shit
no, not again.

we should have known.
maybe we wanted cotton
candy luck. maybe we
believed. what trash.
we believed like dogs
believe.

to weep

sweating in the kitchen
trying to hit one out of here
56 years old
fear bounding up my arms
toenails much too long
growth on side of leg

the difference in the factories was
we all felt pain
together

the other night I went to see the
great soprano
she was still beautiful
still sensual
still in personal mourning
but she missed note after note
drunk
she murdered art

sweating in the kitchen
I don't want to murder art

I should see the doctor and get that thing
cut off my leg
but I am a coward
I might scream and frighten a child
in the waiting room

I would like to fuck the great soprano
I'd like to weep in her hair

and there's Lorca down in the road
eating Spanish bullets in the dust

the great soprano has never read my poems
but we both know how to murder art
drink and mourn

sweating in this kitchen
the formulas are gone
the best poet I ever knew is dead
the others write me letters

I tell them that I want to fuck

the great soprano
but they write back about other
things
useless things
dull things
vain things

I watch a fly land on my radio

he knows what it is
but he can't talk to me

the soprano is dead.

fair stand the fields of France

in the awesome strumming of no
guitars

I can never get too high

in places where giraffes run like
hate

I can never get too lonely

in bars where celluloid bartenders
serve poisoned laughter

I can never get too drunk

at the bottom of mountains
where suicides flow into the streams
I smile better than the Mona Lisa

high lonely drunken grin of grief
I love you.

art

as the
spirit
waned
the
form
appears.

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