

# 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)

Traducción:

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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).

Iniciativa neta de *AGUAFUERTE PRODUCCIONES*, editorial marginal sostenida desde un rincón de Sudamérica.

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## Agradecimientos de la edición original en inglés

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 como<sup>1</sup>:

☞ *20 poemas* (España)

(Mondadori, 1998)

☞ *Poemas de la Última Noche de la Tierra*.<sup>2</sup> (España)

(Dvd, 2004)

☞ *Lo más Importante es Saber Atravesar el Fuego*.<sup>3</sup> (España)

(La Poesía, señor Hidalgo, 2002)

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

(Visor, 2005)

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<sup>1</sup> En los casos que no se indique se trata sólo de antologías.

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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*<sup>5</sup> (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 –N<sup>o</sup> 102–, 1996)
- ☞ *El Amor es un Perro Infernal.*<sup>6</sup> (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 3<sup>a</sup> Piso.*<sup>7</sup> (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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> 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*<sup>8</sup>

☞ *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.

hanz polilla

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

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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  
doblado 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 hiela 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 creerme  
[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  
ombiligo 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 sonr e

las viejas novias a n llaman  
algunas del a o pasado  
algunas del a o anterior  
algunas de los a os anteriores a  ese.  
es bueno terminar los asuntos  
cuando no funcionan  
es bueno tambi en 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.

despu es de sobrevivir a m i  
tienen muchas alegr ias.  
yo hago que sus vidas parezcan mejores  
despu es de m i.

les he dado  
puntos de comparaci on  
nuevos horizontes  
nuevos penes  
m as paz  
un buen futuro  
sin m i.

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.



## **abrazo 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

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Grateful acknowledgement is given to the following magazines where some of these poems originally appeared: Blitz, The Goodly Company, Hearse, Midwest, Ontario Review, The Other, Target and Wormwood Review. Thanks also to Capra Press which originally published some of these poems as a chapbook called Fire Station.

## 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 boatripe.  
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 prowl 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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F. Silva  
2006