

mine

She lays like a lump.
I can feel the great empty mountain
of her head
but she is alive. She yawns and
scratches her nose and
pulls up the covers.
Soon I will kiss her goodnight
and we will sleep.
And far away is Scotland
and under the ground the
gophers run.
I hear engines in the night
and through the sky a white
hand whirls:
goodnight, dear, goodnight.

layover

Making love in the sun, in the morning sun
in a hotel room
above the alley
where poor men poke for bottles;
making love in the sun
making love by a carpet redder than our blood,
making love while the boys sell headlines
and Cadillacs,
making love by a photograph of Paris
and an open pack of Chesterfields,
making love while other men—poor
fools—
work.

That moment—to this . . .
may be years in the way they measure,
but it's only one sentence back in my mind—
there are so many days
when living stops and pulls up and sits
and waits like a train on the rails.
I pass the hotel at 8
and at 5; there are cats in the alleys
and bottles and bums,
and I look up at the window and think,
I no longer know where you are,
and I walk on and wonder where
the living goes
when it stops.

the day I kicked a bankroll out the window

and, I said, you can take your rich aunts and uncles
and grandfathers and fathers
and all their lousy oil
and their seven lakes
and their wild turkey
and buffalo
and the whole state of Texas,
meaning, your crow-blasts
and your Saturday night boardwalks,
and your 2-bit library
and your crooked councilmen
and your pansy artists—
you can take all these
and your weekly newspaper
and your famous tornadoes
and your filthy floods
and all your yowling cats
and your subscription to *Life*,
and shove them, baby,
shove them.

I can handle a pick and ax again (I think)
and I can pick up
25 bucks for a 4-rounder (maybe);
sure, I'm 38
but a little dye can pinch the gray
out of my hair;
and I can still write a poem (sometimes),

don't forget *that*, and even if
they don't pay off,
it's better than waiting for death and oil,
and shooting wild turkey,
and waiting for the world
to begin.

all right, bum, she said,
get out.

what? I said.

get out. you've thrown your
last tantrum.
I'm tired of your damned tantrums:
you're always acting like a
character
in an O'Neill play.

but I'm different, baby,
I can't help
it.

you're different, all right!
God, how different!
don't slam
the door
when you leave.

but, baby, I *love* your
money!

you never once said
you loved me!

what do you want
a liar or a
lover?

you're neither! out, bum,
out!

. . . but baby!

go back to O'Neill!

I went to the door,
softly closed it and walked away,
thinking: all they want
is a wooden Indian
to say yes and no
and stand over the fire and

not raise too much hell;
but you're getting to be
an old man, kiddo:
next time play it closer
to the
vest.

I taste the ashes of your death

the blossoms shake
sudden water
down my sleeve,
sudden water
cool and clean
as snow—
as the stem-sharp
swords
go in
against your breast
and the sweet wild
rocks
leap over
and
lock us in.

love is a piece of paper torn to bits

all the beer was poisoned and the capt. went down
and the mate and the cook
and we had nobody to grab sail
and the N.wester ripped the sheets like toenails
and we pitched like crazy
the bull tearing its sides
and all the time in the corner
some punk had a drunken slut (my wife)
and was pumping away
like nothing was happening
and the cat kept looking at me
and crawling in the pantry
amongst the clanking dishes
with flowers and vines painted on them
until I couldn't stand it anymore
and took the thing
and heaved it
over
the side.

to the whore who took my poems

some say we should keep personal remorse from the
poem,
stay abstract, and there is some reason in this,
but jezus:
12 poems gone and I don't keep carbons and you have
my
paintings too, my best ones; it's stifling:
are you trying to crush me out like the rest of them?
why didn't you take my money? they usually do
from the sleeping drunken pants sick in the corner.

next time take my left arm or a fifty
but not my poems:
I'm not Shakespeare
but sometimes simply
there won't be any more, abstract or otherwise;
there'll always be money and whores and drunkards
down to the last bomb,
but as God said,
crossing his legs,
I see where I have made plenty of poets
but not so very much
poetry.

shoes

shoes in the closet like Easter lilies,
my shoes alone right now,
and other shoes with other shoes
like dogs walking avenues,
and smoke alone is not enough
and I got a letter from a woman in a hospital,
love, she says, love,
more poems,
but I do not write,
I do not understand myself,
she sends me photographs of the hospital
taken from the air,
but I remember her on other nights,
not dying,
shoes with spikes like daggers
sitting next to mine,
how these strong nights
can lie to the hills,
how these nights become quite finally
my shoes in the closet
flown by overcoats and awkward shirts,
and I look into the hole the door leaves
and the walls, and I do not
write.

a real thing, a good woman

they are always writing about the bulls, the bullfighters,
those who have never seen them,
and as I break the webs of the spiders reaching for my wine
the umhum of bombers, gd.dmn hum breaking the solace,
and I must write a letter to my priest about some 3rd. st. whore
who keeps calling me up at 3 in the morning;
up the old stairs, ass full of splinters,
thinking of pocket-book poets and the priest,
and I'm over the typewriter like a washing machine,
and look look the bulls are still dying
and they are razing them raising them
like wheat in the fields,
and the sun's black as ink, black ink that is,
and my wife says Brock, for Christ's sake,
the typewriter all night,
how can I sleep? and I crawl into bed and
kiss her hair sorry sorry sorry
sometimes I get excited I don't know why
friend of mine said he was going to write about
Manolete . . .
who's that? nobody, kid, somebody dead
like Chopin or our old mailman or a dog,
go to sleep, go to sleep,
and I kiss her and rub her head,
a good woman,
and soon she sleeps and I wait
for morning.

one night stand

the latest hardware dangling upon my pillow catches
window lamplight through the mist of alcohol.

I was the whelp of a prude who whipped me when
the wind shook blades of grass the eye could see
move and
you were a
convent girl watching the nuns shake loose
the Las Cruces sand from God's robes.

you are
yesterday's
bouquet so sadly
raided. I kiss your poor
breasts as my hands reach for love
in this cheap Hollywood apartment smelling of
bread and gas and misery.

we move through remembered routes
the same old steps smooth with hundreds of
feet, 50 loves, 20 years.
and we are granted a very small summer, and
then it's
winter again
and you are moving across the floor
some heavy awkward thing

and the toilet flushes, a dog barks
a car door slams . . .
it's gotten inescapably away, everything,
it seems, and I light a cigarette and
await the oldest curse
of all.

the mischief of expiration

I am, at best, the delicate thought of a delicate hand
that quenches for the mixing rope, and when
beneath the love of flowers I am still,
as the spider drinks the greening hour—
strike gray bells of drinking,
let a frog say
 a voice is dead,
let the beasts from the pantry
and the days that have hated this,
the contrary wives of unblinking grief,
plains of small surrender
between Mexicali and Tampa;
hens gone, cigarettes smoked, loaves sliced,
and lest this be taken for wry sorrow:
put the spider in wine,
tap the thin skull sides that held poor lightning,
make it less than a treacherous kiss,
put me down for dancing
you much more dead,
I am a dish for your ashes,
I am a fist for your air.

the most immense thing about beauty
is finding it gone.

love is a form of selfishness

pither, the eustachian tube and the green bugdead ivy
and the way we walked tonight
with the sky climbing on our ears and in our pockets
while we talked of things that didn't matter
and the streetcar rocked and howled its color
which we didn't notice except as a thing beside the eve
as we mentioned sex through palsies,
pither, the red fire, pither the eustachian tube!
gone are the days, gone is the green bugdead ivy
and the words we said tonight that didn't matter;
X 12, Cardinal and Gold

GOLD GOLD GOLD GOLD GOLD!

your eyes are gold
 your hair is gold
 your love is gold
 your grave is gold
and the streets go past like people walking
and the bells ring like bells ringing;
your hands are gold and your voice is gold
and all the children walking
and the trees growing and the idiots selling papers
34256780000 oh while you are

eustachian tube
 red fire
 greenbugdead
 ivy
cardinal and gold
and the words we said tonight
are going away
 over the trees
down by the streetcar
and I have closed the book
 with the red red lion
down by the gates of gold.

*for Jane: with all the love I had, which was
not enough*

I pick up the skirt,
I pick up the sparkling beads
in black,
this thing that moved once
around flesh,
and I call God a liar,
I say anything that moved
like that
or knew
my name
could never die
in the common verity of dying,
and I pick
up her lovely
dress,
all her loveliness gone,
and I speak
to all the gods,
Jewish gods, Christ-gods,
chips of blinking things,
idols, pills, bread,
fathoms, risks,
knowledgeable surrender,
rats in the gravy of 2 gone quite mad

without a chance,
hummingbird knowledge, hummingbird chance,
I lean upon this,
I lean on all of this
and I know:
her dress upon my arm:
but
they will not
give her back to me.

for Jane

225 days under grass
and you know more than I.

they have long taken your blood,
you are a dry stick in a basket.

is this how it works?

in this room
the hours of love
still make shadows.

when you left
you took almost
everything.

I kneel in the nights
before tigers
that will not let me be.

what you were
will not happen again.

the tigers have found me
and I do not care.

notice

the swans drown in bilge water,
take down the signs,
test the poisons,
barricade the cow
from the bull,
the peony from the sun,
take the lavender kisses from my night,
put the symphonies out on the streets
like beggars,
get the nails ready,
flog the backs of the saints,
stun frogs and mice for the cat of the soul,
burn the enthralling paintings,
piss on the dawn,
my love
is dead.