

foreword

out of the Race/

[*background: the announcement of the 9th race*]

out of the game today.
went down to the races
see my muse's horse run

"buckshot" #9

...old leather
...scrap rag
...cracked & battered
coat of arms

pedigree: matchstick on dead legs

(*a few minutes earlier at the bar...*)

[what's this I hear about waiting on inspiration? ex-riders squawking how it's left them, brood over faded platforms while their train comes in from some war (like an old black and white), or have some new spark rekindle the burnt out parts.

"horseshit!"

howlings and whimpers from spayed bitches – stiff straights, gutless as drywall. next time, stick a battery charger in my ears for the juice. and what can you tell them? "go teach horses to drive a bus", or "talk to camels who run numbers" – rather have intercourse with a toothache. backyard cackle clank & clutter: horsemen to cocksman crow for hammer and no trigger.

it's not cerebral; some wild stallion or stud buckin' at the ready, just saddle him. rusty, twisted chain bent but never broken/can't even saw the damn thing off! "...music from a farther room" (as old T.S. was wont to say). needs to breathe, feel up the air...slug it's way out of the bottle (believe me, I've bled one or two). talent with no guts are good jokes with bad punch lines. mind over movement might as well peddle beef (horsemeat) and leave wining to gamblers who have the stomach for it.

okay...we're coming up on the 9th ...this one's on me (drowns glass), here it is: the play's the thing, it's all in the risk – a party all by yourself. hey man, no cup is run without a chaser...I'm out!]

[*horses at the starting gate*]

"c'mon Buckshot, show these pastry ponies
some backwater thunder

...that old time religion!

mississippi barrel

& sandbags full of gunpowder!"

In the Race!

All spit & fire ...and running it out!
black eyes burn coals in the sun
thick among polished marble [ah...fuck 'em!]
hide to hide & in the raw the naked spur

rider less a ripple in the plan ...
god long gone and riding it out!
running out the dream of lions
like Hemingway's old man

not too bad...

came in second to last

leading him back to the stable
they muttered to themselves
how many more left in him

but it was a fine day...

sun beamed proudful father
protective & forgiving

tree-lined streets bent on strutting
& days spent for losing...

then there's the canvas bag:
man's bones & dead history

that chomp at the bit,
my love steak

the old fire horse...

yeah, always good scratch for an itchy stretch

I mean

...what the hell

shortcuts & dead ends/

"I love to remember more than to live
...and besides, what's the difference?"

Federico Fellini

intro

longing dangles imagination's feet
secretly resists noose's pulsing lust
loosen knot tied to its past,
swings from branches fantasies grip
whose fruit's out of season.

famine's acquired taste
feast on stolen moments:
stretch wider canvas
in a circus of stars,
celebrate friends & lovers -
old desires with
younger memories.

1.

*look forward
to the past...*

1.1

whose nostalgia's ahead of its time.
imagine myself in black & white
color pages filling shadows...

gin joints with their fractured air of alcoholic breath
drum up jazzy nights & hot numbers -
hourglass figure's immortal lines zip guitars in dresses
pack suicide swings &
.22 Brownings in nylons
saucy dish juggling bowls rattles hive stings the mark
slippery slink onto stool
brush of silky legs flash
double-crossed openings
snappy dames as damsels on the lamb from wolves
with a voice that wets her words
spider webs steel coated strings
plays the fly in a sticky jam;
late-night driveway's hopped up Edsel oiled & waxed
throws curve engine running
soft boiled eggs run over easy
flip over a hot grill's sizzle
doorway's cocked silhouettes smoke shotgun smiles
shipwrecks in shot glasses & amnesia on the rocks
handcuffed me to boiler blackjacked from behind
railroads for fast twists on the outskirts of nowhere
hustler's express punched her ticket out of town
the only new trick for old dogs is to roll over;
left high & dry like cheap bourbon sucked from bottles
walk rain soaked pavements under yellow lampposts
and worn out fedoras where memories never age.

1.2

pose outside myself so I can strip inside
the long & tall of it cut in short widths:

vitality orphans youth
like a gift unties present
my tracks run ten years late -
steel jockey hoppin' runaways
berth to boxcar fugitives
awaken phantom lives
caught by surprise.

journeys abandon
fearless fervor
less the fever
from no rush
but mass transit.

2.

meanwhile...

2.1

lonely people
eating in c_

[character interrupts author]

"okay, that's it, I'm not going any further!"

"can we discuss this later?"

"no, because you say this after every poem and never keep your promise, but I'm the one getting his ass whipped running your races while you sit back in your easy chair"

"but Borges said that the author must turn his back to the reader"

"that's why he was such a lousy poet"

"hey, wait a minute!..."

"well, that's neither here or there, you have your own labyrinth to unravel without being ensnared by intellectual webs...what about *my* fantasies? christ, you could at least throw in some romance! I'm not moving until you tell me where I'm heading"

"nowhere, you're already there - you're quite fortunate"

"see, you're doing it again! remember, it's only through *me* that they get to know *you*"

"by holding my words ransom? listen, we're both puppets; the only thing that separates us are the strings...it's not where you land but how you fall"

"yeah, but I'm the one left hung out to dry - the dirty linen you wash your hands of"

"why be dressed in borrowed robes strung like a spool entangled by its own yarn: show & tell's object specific inventory shrouds sentimental journeys of turkish rugs & dead relatives - rigor mortise in academic tombs. you favor fresh air, or blow smoke?"

"I know all that, but I have feelings too. I'm doing the hard road, brother, bit & blinders: your dead-end donkey. at least give me something at the tail end I can hold as my own"

[enter critic] "he's absolutely correct, you strip the character of any sentiment whereby ambiguity fails to address the issues that ultimately alienates your readers"

"who is this guy?" "I have no idea"

"~~wait a minute! I have every right to express...~~"

"so...here's my condition: I want you to include one of my poems"

"oh no, not this again. c'mon, you're place is under saddle in dirt & gravel"

"exactly, it's from my perspective. tweak it a little, you're the 'artist'...I call it, *ass fault* ["oh god"]...go ahead, read it." (hands author poem badly need of work)

[Note to reader: to be judged out of competition]

ass fault/

there are no moments for the moment -
broke 100 strides till the sidewalk ends.
think life lives in the living of it
but looking back see too late.

progress comforts us with
the stillness that's present;
there's always tomorrow.

I overstepped my boundaries
on too broad an avenue
for so small a walk:
sinews strained desire's dance
closing its eyes to another's beat
extorting effort who lived off my time.

shortsighted & open-eyed
I should have leapt without thinking,
I could of thought in the leaping
to see that far from so close.

"I don't know, I'll try to fit it in...hey, it's not me, Sixfold has a 10 page limit. look, I'll write you a good part at intermission - share a real victory between races where art posed for still-life...your moment in the sun to cool your travels, you dig?"

"uh-huh, we'll see..."

[re-enter critic] "you have offended my honor. you are obviously oblivious to my position which you will be made painfully aware of under the full weight of its instrument: I challenge you to a duel! I shall expect your attendance on page 7"

"gee, how will I recognize you?"

"I'm afraid your transparency will not serve you on this occasion" [exits]

"let me take this turkey, ruffle his feathers!"

"no, this is something I have to do on my own...afterwards, I'll buy you a cup of coffee at the place you like on the corner, okay?"

"could you throw in a danish, about 5' 8?"

"very funny, now hurry up and change for the next scene"

2.1

lonely people
eating in cars.
solitary lot
concrete space;
chew fat
like purpose
suck out bones
of misfortune.

but I the worst -
fires flesh
marrow's bone,
fat dreams
on time's watch...

vehicles feed
themselves,
hunger kills
leftover life;

an instrument
of bad timing
in an age
out of tune.

late shadows
blot sunlight:
who am I
with no sense
of where?

2.2

how does one end up here?
character drawn in and played out...
flickering shadow between passing cars
like an old film reel -

wait, always wait
the wait of the wait
that expects desire
outlives the moment

three-quarter noon
you're half way there;
empty's never light,
it's not dark
but getting late

absence made clearly by shortness of aim, or
possibly the bad luck of
moving targets. should have observed greater distance
packed lighter suitcase ...who knows
maybe vision distracts sight -

landscape portraits illusions distort
gamble lucky accidents
bleeds beautiful ugly;

invention ghosts my
perpetual presence

fresh starts forward same old story: first to arrive last
(and they keep score after a while)...ay, there's the rub out
honorable defeats choose their ends - appetite's mistake
was being courted on the sly paying the fare between meals
the leftovers of half-lives wait on tips serving time...
but when do you have time (to live) between the living?

2.3

and how do you look for someone who was never there?

(an open parentheses run on sentences punctuate
distinction ...an out clause whoring halls of literature
lurid, open-faced molesting ideas plunge deeply to
bottom out depth's desperation from whistle's graveyard
the last tango in poetry -

snapping whips in ghost towns

[now there am I..I am there now]

intermission

out of the blue...

*still-life's artful grace whose
absence roamed vacant halls
where forgeries hung in its place
brushed under memory's dust
I pictured on every face...*

8 years between winters,
bohemia & vivaldi open your eyes
and 6000 miles to close them

my body a tower, limbs for blades
cut sections out of air like light solving fog

shatter mirrors to open windows:
silhouettes sculpt relieved wait
uncovered white sheets
beneath the prayers
filling blanks
of written out pieces
shapes mold & harden
the naked spaces

skin maps measured between two lifelines
- gypsy blood & mad refrains
watch children laugh in the rain...
tiny years paced closing distance
in cooler shades

the first drip on canvas
another self, a Lorca poem
that night... we ran the best of miles

2.4 ("the duel")

next chapter finds me in advance.

scene shifts [exterior: battlefield]

choosing instruments
negotiate at 20 paces
or savage hand-to-hand
in a gentleman's duel;

enigmas strike
the obvious
secondhand:
courage screws
no place where
words can't stick

options for sword
I counter with pen -
climactic showdown

in the epic battle
of small triumphs;

the learned
exercise theorems
pencil-thin, unleaded
political correctness
as giant eraser
trial runs exams final:
soft hands smooth
hard roads
pave easy exits
on solid grounds

flashes steel to bit player
who draws between frames:

poet stakes
last chance
horseless
but untamed
wordsmith's anvil
pounds shape
into sound!
the arts of
permanence
burn & brand
stiletto tattoos *skin body paint with silence*

3.

stardust...

3.1

leaves grit in the eyes: wiped a thousand sleeps to embellish daydreams
sandman's no wiser, mystery's just sharper - provocative, low-brow
keeps you carnal - she's less shy with age - ripened - reveals more flesh
apple bottoms of hourglass dreams: the stronger sex in see-through dress

3.2.1

desires as nightmares steal sleep while awake
beggars whose pockets of light
turned inside out ignore the cost

3.2.2

I'm everyone to none - back row spectator's front row seat
miscast understudy in minor play, *providence breaks a leg*
where hindsight blinds fortune and stars look like bullet holes

but I only pretend to be me

cowardice beats the hell out of bravery, slips into its costume unnoticed
stardust & tinsel tailor backstage performer's great feats as his own
role's reversal stiffens resolve, sandbags raise curtains
hallucination's disguise! pied pauper's king of rats
doll down dialing up - second-hand hand-me-downs
prefer pigs without lipstick, the slut in virgin's clothes:

3.2.3 '**Passing Whim**' - opening night

[Overture] *grounded, life's a crowd...I'll hit the air running*

(Act I - The Hobo)

If they paid pennies for thoughts I'd be laden...
heads above them all &
plenty of tail
a new Aengus! wandering wand
dips Eden's apple to hook golden trout...
lay traps for the wild
suck poison out of beasts!
crack nut while throwing bones to shadows
blood-thorns... copper-rich...
& beggar dressed thief
trades moonlight for stones

(Act II - The Big Easy)

easy afternoons, lazy love and white sleep...
heat waves bathe liquid rhymes - slow death's four corner dance
pores wet thirsty sheets walls rain floor too hot for my feet...
laughter of smoke rings pillows for breakfast
vertical smiles purple hours as blindman time fumbles compass...
mouths foam lather's sting tongues prick like razor's first shave
vices in a pinch almost child-proof running zippers
chances cloudy mean sky: knit brows, puffy cheeks
think'll wait... sudden nights open sidewalks...
til... sun hustles moon .and people walk
backwardS

3.2.3 1/2 (reviews)

"Gaudy & Gallant!..." "...A Monster's Ball!" "Sonic Symphony...Hip with Hop!"

"Strangely hypnotic - moody music combined with clever narrative ascend b-type schlock. Rarely has debauchery drawn artistic circles around nobility as to be inviting. Those who look to traverse boundaries that broaden expectations...this one's for the ages!"

"Aside from fulfilling its dramatic obligations, the spontaneity is lax enough to make one yearn for 30's Paris Bohemia...and what we've lost: discovery's liberation through artistic necessity and sexual gamble - when there was enough space to fit time in"

(on 'shortcuts & dead ends')

[interviewer] "I wrote in my review... 'Compulsive examination of identity that asks the question: do you assume to be someone else in order to play yourself? Up close & personal - obliterates divide between documentary and fiction. mysteriously provoking, film-like sits firmly beside Antonioni & Kieslowski. A masterwork'

...what is your personal take on the piece?"

"well, thank you, John...um, contentment or existence, right? seem to run parallel lives as if answers were separate from questions - appearing to each other as foreign objects

trying to reconcile the same language while they tally heavy losses. Aptly titled, this sort of 'nouvelle vague' art form endures a deconstruction: accumulating those loose fragments that link our past to re-examine its possibilities - as if it were new again"

[character] "man, what slop...do you need a shovel to dig yourself out?"

[ham & cheese actor] "get outta here!" [interviewer] "I'm sorry?"

"oh, nothing..." "what's your advice to aspiring writers & thespians?"

"take the lead - model role to
dress the part, everyone else
underplays you;
poor imitations
sincerely falter"

3.3

reason makes up spare room for dreams to sleep it off:
it's thought that counts.

Finis

*life's forever
in debt...*

being all I've owned, sharing our secret
conspirator & witness speaks loudest in silence
a thousand words deep after dark
blinded me at first sight -
I'll find you with my
eyes closed

afterword

(the man who was almost there...)

to have and have not/

playing someone else's part
liberated strengths I had courage to play myself.

fiction's certified copy documents my life as art -
masterpiece of unfulfilled expression
silently impressed.

originals forge signature unsigned -
ambition's failure to remain anonymous
defeat wars won than lost.

words write themselves lines
save drowned men on dry land,
unstrung deliriums familiarly calm
lighten clouds that storm every stage
clarity doubts;

conversations in shorthand - speaking for oneself
freedom inspires nothing else:

the successful regret
having failed so well.