

foreword

out of the Race/

[background: the announcement of the 9th race]

out of the game today.
went down to the races
see my horse's muse 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 vessel or instrument buckin' at the ready, just saddle her. 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 sell steaks (horsemeat) and leave wining to gamblers.

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 ...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

easements & alleys/

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

Federico Fellini

intro

fantasies voice
imagination's
lasting impression
of silent resistance
to forget its past.

life as canvas
inspires invention's
circus in 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;
 silhouettes cocked in doorways smoke shotgun smiles
 handcuffed me to a boiler blackjacked from behind;
 walking 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 the present,
my tracks run ten years late -
from berth to boxcars
 phantom trains
 awaken past 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 afterwards?"

"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 in an intellectual web...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"

"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 & lifeless exotics - rigor mortise in academic graveyards. you favor fresh air, or to blow smoke?"

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

[enter critic] "he's absolutely correct, you strip him 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 the saddle in dirt & gravel"

"well, they should see it from my perspective. you can fix it up a bit - 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
sees too late.
progress comforts us
in 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
paying off 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'll try to fit it in, but I can't promise anything...hey, it's not me, Sixfold has a limit of
10 pages. look, I'll tell you what I'll do...I'll write you a good part at intermission -
a real moment I'll share with you; a victory between wars where we won one.
don't worry, you'll have your moment in the sun to cool your travels"

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

"when we're done, 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

character drawn in and played out...
flickering shadow between passing cars
like an old film reel -

fuel burns mileage
chokes on exhaustion
that expects desire
outlives the moment;
it's not dark
but getting late.

the leftovers of half-lives wait on tips serving time...
but when do you have time (to live) between the living?

2.3

whoring the halls of literature molesting ideas, plunged deeply to bottom out at
depth's desperation...the last tango in poetry – snapping whips in ghost towns

[now there am I..I am there now]
wordsmith's anvil pounds
shape into sound!
the arts of permanence
burn & brand stiletto tattoos
for bit player flashes steel
who draws between frames:
skin body paint with silence.

intermission

out of the blue...

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,
blank sheets double space
shapes mold & harden
written out pieces.

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.

3.

stardust...

3.1

makes man no wiser
mystery's just sharper
provocative, low-brow
keeps you carnal -
she's less shy with age
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
in a front row seat:
minor understudy
miscast in a bad play -
 providence breaks a leg
 where hindsight blinds fortune
 and stars look like bullet holes

role's reversal stiffens resolve
sandbags raise curtains -
lurid hallucination in disguise!
 doll it down dialing it up
 second-hand hand-me-downs
 prefer pigs without lipstick:
 the slut in virgin's clothes

backstage performer
of stardust & tinsel
interpret great feats
of my own accomplishment:

(opening night of '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

3.2.3

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

*love's forever
in debt...*

being all I've owned

conspirator & witness
speaks loudest in silence
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:
unstrung
deliriums
familiarily 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.