

## CONVERSATION IN THE SMOKING CAR

Boys, it was just like me then  
To search the city and hide my head,  
Dreaming that women were sipping the sky  
From my bed like a glass of dark water.  
To be frank I was pale as dogwood—not  
A menace in a public park, nor an actor  
For heaven's sake; but one of the boys—acne,  
Glandular, you know, and the Good Time.  
Undermined by arteries the cities  
Rose and fell like great black breasts  
But no great heart beat beneath the ground.  
Love drove toward me like a tunnel on the turnpike.  
Whistling a tune I blew the horn, I knew  
Love was a land of sun flowers, thunder and corn.  
Darkness. Even the car radio failed, boys those  
Brave songs died like colts in a storm.  
“Love is as bold as a belly,” she sang  
And she sang something else that I can't repeat  
Incognito or even alone in the Men's Room.  
On the last train out of the mouthing city  
That night I was spat like an old broken tooth.

Nothing much happens on B & O,  
In the dining car my buddies  
Conspire to save me from my own  
Best intentions—jaws that would have me now  
If I were the last piece of liver.  
Boys, I know we have a job to do,  
I know that rage, like a washing machine,  
Is a convenience we can all afford — several  
Angry gurgles and a clean conclusion.  
But why are the highways dual?  
Why are the trains on separate tracks?  
Boys, we all accelerate from different places  
Into the same darkening direction.  
Nothing much happens on the B & O  
Boys I wish someone grand — with bright wings  
Moving like scissors or shuffled cards  
Would come down the aisle to collect our fares.

Commuting is cold and wild now  
The days have become blue hounds above the train  
And all the way home I dream that suffering  
Has something to do with Long Island.  
Boys, a plain stone or cinder would do it, for  
I tell you something in me worships me,  
Bays for me, and now the train is home, boys,  
Something in me wants to die.

*Grandin Conover*