

Poem for What We Were

Driving home from Palatka
we picked up Radio Havana;
they spoke of heroic denial
and played samba for us through the rain.
This morning the President said
we can afford everything
plus as many bombs as we want
if we are patient in our struggle for liberty
against the enemy a twentieth our side.
The President fat in his rose garden.
Che in his flowering grave.
Jefferson the size of a stamp.

-- Edwin Ochester

To the Girl Who Photocopies My Manuscript

You do not read my poems as you copy them.
You read my titles. You say, "This Time of Tiger."
I say, yes, no to the poems I want copies of.

But they mean nothing to you. They are only words.
O girl, I would that you were less perfunctory.
These are my poems. I have labored over them.

I am not as clever as you and your machine.
I like your machine. It is a magic machine.
Deep in its belly it is making my poems.

That is magic. I have needed years to do that.
It must know everything about me to do that.
I do not think I could make poems in my belly.

You are nice. You are automatic and shiny.
I want to touch you. I say your hair is pretty.
You thank me. You do not put your hand on my knee.

I do not think I would put my hand on your knee.
I think you would rattle. I think you would hit me.
I think you would scramble back into your machine.