

Women Is Losers

Sitting in the kitchen
talking with his friends
about the war, ecology,
rock and roll, anything
that matters,

he smokes his way
through three pipefuls
of good hash,
eats the crab curry
she has brought to the table,
generally
has a good time.

His friends
keep looking at her,
sometimes in front,
sometimes behind
his back. Admiring,
checking for signs of wear

And after they leave her
alone with the dishes
for the living room
and the stereo

a two thousand-year-old fish
leaps
from behind her tongue,
lies perfectly still
in the sink, shining,
says a few choice words
and disappears down the drain.

10/16/70 Hollywood

For Jane

When she gets no mail
from him
for a few days
she knows he has found
another woman.

Then a letter comes,
bursting
with what he hasn't given away

to anyone. He says
he feels like someone
who keeps returning things
to a store, the clerks
all looking strangely at him
because he can't explain
what it is he wants
or what he's lost.

He reminds her
how the leaves turn colors
and die
in the city where they
used to live.
She puts that letter
with the others.
Makes the bed,
makes herself up
for whoever is coming.
She thinks the vacuum he left
is just fresh air.

10/28/70 Cleveland

-- Joel Deutsch

Allston, MA

The Window: Nashville, Tennessee

Before the highways were hung overhead
we drove through the fringes of the slum, on
our way for a day in the city.

My father pointed to a shack attached
to a grocery, where black boys stood
noticing me through inches of conditioned air.
He says,
"That's where he died. See the shadow
on the window."
There was no shadow there for me,

until several Saturdays later
my father reminded us to look for it.
Mother told him that he sure repeated the
same stories a lot.
Then I saw it.
The shadow of an old man
who'd sat for thirty years next to the window.
And who died months before he was noticed.