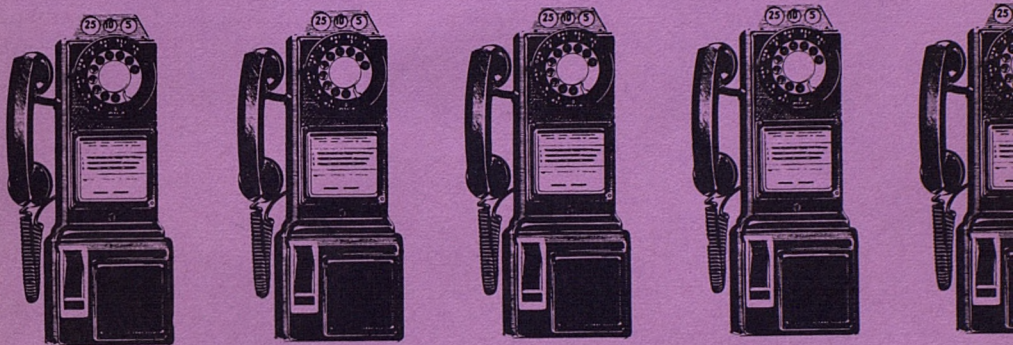


WORMIE WOULD



CALL YOU - 49

The Wormwood Review

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....

for sale
larks
impalas
monkey
bait

turn over
a new leaf
ale &
brook
for
alewives

witch
doctor
painted
face
red
of fire
green
of tree
black
of
night

dead
man's
curve
grass
grows
round
dead
man

-- Gloria Kenison

Millis, MA

wild asparagus farm

showing me round
your farm your
feet so soiled

also your hands
digging into the
ground you

complain it's sandy
but smile
not having to

plant this portion
coming here only
when you please.

the air moves as

as new
playing cards
the air moves as

cold
quivering poplars
decay of

mountain ash berries
in orange clusters
there

the final
seizure
by robins.

-- Ronald Baatz

North Arlington, NJ

Ladder

When 4 I thot
if you could find or
make a ladder tall enough
to reach past the clouds
you could reach God
but it scared me to
think about climbing a
ladder that tall because
it was bound to be wobbly
& ricketty & scarier the
higher up you got.

Scrambling

last week feeling pushed
to finish up for Crocker
show slammed drawing finger
in car door in front of
Lucky's people all over
so holding breath reopened
door with left hand &
nonchalantly went about
my business bleeding
ever so slightly

Joseph Raffael

1st time I saw Joseph
was Steve's wedding in Davis.
It was outdoors on a
school size lawn.
Hundreds of people but
you couldnt miss him.
He looked taller than everyone.
He radiated actually glowed.
Had me thinking in
religious figures.
Since then I've gotten
to know him & carefully
screen out the spooky stuff.
But you catch it
from his paintings of
animals or from the
gigantic head he did
of Picasso: a spirituality
so straight forward &
loaded you feel in danger
of suffocation or
conversion.

Got To Go North

Dreams nag me put me
in bed a boy
in her house...
by the window...
curtains ghosting in
with smells of new lumber
& cherry blossoms...
Got to get up to Susanville
before Winter.
See my Grandmother.
Tell her I love her
before snow
cuts us off.

-- Phil Weidman

North Highlands, CA

Good Things About The Ocean (Number One)

One good thing about the ocean is that
it takes the rough edges off everything.

Quebec Summer Vacations (Part Four)

Next to seeing you naked
I like seeing you
with a coffee pot
best of all

I guess I'm a victim of my appetites.

Nicotine

It's strange that the woman
who works in the tobacco store
couldn't understand
why I asked her if she smoked.

Friends (Part One)

Yves
takes so long to eat
that he has to stop
half way through
to have a cigarette.

Inflation

Yesterday
I read the Winnipeg Free Press
it cost me fifteen cents.

Schedule

Sometimes
I make you
in the morning

other times
I make the bed
while you make the coffee.

The Roman Spring

There is something sad
about older women
trying to atone
for the beauty
they think they've lost
by decorating themselves
with things
they think are beautiful.

-- Marco Fraticelli

Ville LaSalle, Quebec, Canada

One Dream Movie

1. Green visor cap
on White man
near corner streets sign

slowly raises/aims
a scoped deer rifle
2. 3 multi-colored jerseys
on racing bikes
pedal thru city streets
in slow motion

the last falls
bleeding
3. 3 girls pass
in little/red/sportscar
waving

at 2 cyclists
pedalling on
country road
4. Rabbit runs
left to right
across country road

(zoom in)
on beer can
with hole

5. The White man
runs stumbling
across plowed field

6. A red nailed hand
pops top
of cola can

moving to
dripping wet face
of blonde girl

(zoom out)
from porcelain mouth
thru pool party
to White man
kneeling behind bush

7. (black-out
click/shot)

8. White man
digging hole
stops to lift cap
and wipe brow

(zoom out)
to cemetery
with 3 cyclists
riding by

-- David Craft

Harrisburg, PA

Crisis

the blood of
al capone is
now in bottles

&

books & is sleeping with
you today(at night in

america,

Molded From A Letter To Two Convicts

scrape a rock & it
remains: scrape an
insect & begin again;

you, the cold master --

we come in late & sit
behind old ladie's hats.

The Student

crayons worn at the tip & he eats
them. this is art or
music, the same: the fellows
next to him
look smug
when he smiles with his red
teeth/

December Shadows, 1957

(merrie christmas
children

I brought you

pajamas

here I hope
they fit (little does she
know you cannot
sleep

Friends

these constructions of virtue
dangling like the sun in its
last days/

(the modern man;
you cannot escape from the
modern man --)

/even the dog stands when he
eats,
even the eagle must rob at
least one nest;

now they are coming.

Messages At Frisco Hot Springs, New Mexico: A Found Poem

*

Kilroy
was
here

April 25, 1948

*

Its hard to believe but its
the honest truth, I passed
through here July 1911 on
horse back. Back again
by car June 28, 1960. I
used to lived in once
Arizona.

Clem Viamera
8624 Traverse St.
Detroit-13, Mich.

*

Candido Polance spend
his vacation here. Fishing.
August 2, to August 10,
1953

from New Mexico

*

Roses are red
violets are blue
This old sunshine
is good for you,
Joe M. Rodriquez
Estella M. Rodriquez
& Son, David

7-6-52 Bayard, N.M.

*

Thanks to the man from
Calif. who was here
August 6, 1956 that
cleaned the spring out.
fixed it real nice.
May God bless you and
the wife.

*

I been here 7 times
feel alot better.
Reononje

*

Portlan Oregian
Sep 26 1943

If Nothing Happens Here Soon

says Clyde, my
landlord --

"we can all move to North
Carolina and start
bootlegging ... we'll
start with the bonded
stuff first and then
begin messing with the
moonshine later. the rent's
cheap there, we could
make thousands of dollars
in just 2 years -- maybe
then buy a farm. ask your
oldlady, see what she says;
there's nothing to it ...
I'm tired of this working
my ass off for nothing."

"yeah, I'll ask her ..." I say,
as we both look up at the
jets coming in overhead like
Abe Lincoln's finger tips
caressing a chalkboard.

Adolph Coors

a gelatin prepared from
fish bladders: colors
in the storm, same as
through this; it is warm
& we will fuck then sleep.

-- F. A. Nettelbeck

Boulder Creek, CA

The Long Walk Home

dark cedars line
both sides on the road
and I'm hoping that whatever
is crashing through juniper
knows that I support conservation

two shooting stars
trail over my shoulders
and I look up and see
the milky way --

it's like nothing
I've ever seen
or like ann margret's thigh
in a sequined mesh stocking

THE ALCHEMIST

everything you see is made
of earth air fire and water

what about the sheepskin
you sleep on I asked

yes even that is earth
there are no rules here

just then it started
to rain as though
we were all doomed to hell
my car wouldn't start
and she insisted I stay

her son was a whiz at chess
a smug little runt who spoke
nothing but middle english

all night I kept hearing
the fire snap at the wood
her son coughing
it's just his condition

the roads had been washed away
and telephone lines were down
garbling some hopeless message in the mud
about the betrayal of sleep
but we were all so tired
we were all so tired

-- Franz Douskey

Windsor, VT

For My Grandmother

They will not
come in again
with knives.
Your bones,
so near the skin
now. would rub
against them
like dead fish
rising to the surface,
white bellies on white hands.

They lean forward
and narrow their eyes.
You are a wind
pushing them back.
The light
from your body
drives the moths
into the night
in all directions.

What's left of you
is what I need:
a mind so sharp
I could put it
through the middle
of a man's chest
and leave
no crop of blood.

A Vanishing Animal

Curled into corners
in beds next to windows,
we sweat out the night.

We are the fish
of tight pockets,
the masters of closeness.
We have learned to sleep
like a fist knocking,
to take our breaths short
and close to the ribs,
and to dream
of ships sliding out.

We are the insects of the
curved spine.
Having mastered the quick
razor look into the night,
we wait only for the sun
to come,
tooth by yellow tooth,
eating its way
into our room.

-- Curt O. Hayden

Stockton, CA

Water-Colors On A Pond

There was a pond in the king's garden,
Tiled with blue porcelain and filled with
Golden carp, which grew to a certain size,
And no larger.

Years passed, and the pond grew murky
With algae. A brown scum crawled over
The blue porcelain; lilies took root
And sent up slender stems to float
Broad green pads and yellow blossoms.
The golden carp swam in the cool brown water,
Growing older but no bigger,
Their bodies wise to limits.

The water-skin reflected the sky,
Its brown depths backing a mirror
Of white clouds, blue zenith,
Across which faintly golden shadows slid
And water-striders skimmed.
Dragon-flies and damselflies
And caddisflies and mayflies,
Mosquitoes and water-boatmen,
Whirligigs and frogs bequeathed
Their generations here.
The porcelain cracked and moisture oozed
To the surrounding soil;
The feeding stream overspread its channel,
And cat-tails grew, and wild iris.

The king's son, skilled in engineering,
Came to the pond.
He groaned at the weed-choked,
Bug-ridden mess, and called for his
Tractors and dredgers and tilers.
The pond was restored to its pristine blue,
Its surface sprinkled daily with scientific pellets
Designed to maintain good health in fishes.
The golden carp swam in clear water
Over cool, blue porcelain, growing
Older but no bigger,
Their bodies wise to limits.

-- H. E. Turner

Seattle, WA

Ode To A Vermont Brook

That heart you see bumping
along up the mountain stream
belongs to me.

Fistsize butcher's meat
no color plate
the brown trout
find it sweet.

Look, there's an ear lying
careless in last year's leaves
an endless question mark.

Now it hops softly
as the wood thrush
joins being with
the evening dusk.

Those eyeballs, nerve ends
hanging like spaghetti from
the black cherry bloom.

Caress the wild yarrow
unfold the skunk cabbage
warm to the violets
in the morning dew.

Leap, heart,
attention, old ear
dream, eyes.

No one has bumped up this brook
as I have done each spring
genes in an uproar but the sun
licking at the willows.

Once I tried to marry
the entire state: one June
we fingered each other
and what I gave you took.

Monticello

We paid our dollar
the three of us
and advanced across
the lawn utterly charmed
by the salmon brick,
transcendent dome.

Tom, universal man,
what affection I have
for you and your

wind vane which you
read in bed, the campus
at Charlottesville
filling that grand head.
I listen for your laugh
and help drink
your sherry.

Beyond the glare of sun
on white facade
we walked the black
passage of the Negro quarters.
Tom, you who knew the world
so well, I hope you freed
your slaves in some last
testament. It will help
me free mine.

The Weight Of It

The weight of it
not the body
rather her all of it.
I loved her
but she was heavy.

Country dancing
my shadow, spare
intellectual
swung from the
elephant's tail.
Talking she swallowed me
her voice cold cider
on a Vermont afternoon
if that means anything
to you.

Three years later
watching her cross
Harvard Yard
part of me
fingered the scar.
I loved her.
She was heavy.

-- Robert F. Stowell

Christchurch, New Zealand

The Vision Of Word Power

All the words have been written down.
If you don't know what I mean
stay where you are, don't move.
The words won't run away. To see them
is to face them. Be prepared
for temptation. Your body may shrivel,
the mind will disappear, but the part
which is you will hear me. If
you don't already know, you will find out
that you have been reared in chaos.
You have grown used to pointless labor
and the bite of your fellow man.
Your lives swirl in the eddy
that betokens nothing. You have love,
money and mindless leisure
but these are lost in a moment.
Your whole life is a hope
that something good will stay
and you arrange yourselves accordingly.
But this can't work. Good
does not listen to entreaty. It doesn't know
from money or calculated pleasure.
It has nothing to do with romance
or becoming famous. It fastens itself
to a single atom which I extend to you
right now. It's the hand of peace,
the vapor which we breathe. It cuts
thru the stories and the lives
that we live. It's the other side
of this side. It's what you can't imagine,
the only hope, a house full of words
and no one to speak them.

It's Time To Fight

Men are understandably lazy.
They have nowhere to go. Or
they're energetic, developing
long ears and bony fingers. If
they put those fingers in their ears
you've satisfied them, made
their whole life worthwhile. Before
you know it, they're asking
for privilege, and insisting
on what's fair.

Our enemies have refused
to bargain. We have been given
no choice. If we lay down our arms
we may never see them again. Honor
dictates a quick solution. For these reasons
we have decided to fight the last fight.

Where mystery ends, forgetfulness begins.
Give up your search. You don't know
what you're looking for. No,
don't listen to me, keep looking,
who knows what you'll find. On the other side
of this province lies an oceanic playground.
Take it or leave it. But be serious.

-- richard snyder

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Epigrams

Arthur

I

The difference between
childhood & maturity
is the love of money
& the fear of death.

He never sold
his paintings
even though
they're pretty good
I asked why not?
He said
I like to see them
If I sell one it's gone
You're lucky that way
being a poet
You can sell and keep too
Well I
never thought of it
that way
but it's a pretty
consoling thought
if I sell one.

II

The thrill of
not being pregnant
is comparable only
to the thrill of
not being killed
in mortal combat.

III

While I am typing
don't look too close
over my shoulder
these poems
are my maidenhead
you are parting the hair

-- Gail White

New Orleans, LA

Madam Pritchard's very warm arrival

I am vainly haggling you to two
from originalism and sense
All men have grown younger to
than I

their eyes turned towards their
except

when I look at them
in a deep
then they

stare back at me with eyes
how can you

at the end of their journey
arrived

and their innocence

the

upon the

of my mind

it is my own

I feel them

They do not

They keep returning

my deep wine

I am of forever
having changed
all I can
knowing what
and knowledge
there is much yet
to discover

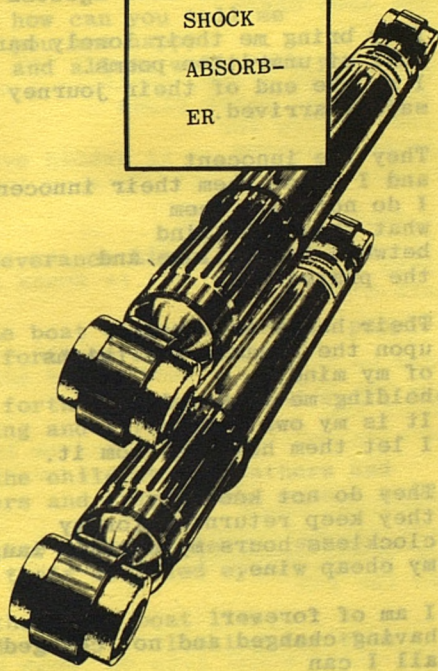
JOYCE

ODAM'S

SHOCK

ABSORB-

ER



Madam Pride

I am vain hag
from original time.
All men have grown younger
than I.
Their eyes turn toward girls

except
when I look at them
in a deep religious way
then they
amazed
stare back at me with ageless love.

They bring me their lonely hands
full of unwritten poems.
I am the end of their journey
safely arrived.

They are innocent
and I allow them their innocence.
I do not tell them
what they will find
between the failure and
the praise.

Their hands are frozen
upon the breasts and thighs
of my mind,
holding me from dying.
It is my own dying.
I let them hold me from it.

They do not know why
they keep returning for my
clockless hours my certain laughter
my cheap wine.

I am of forever
having changed and not changed
all I can
knowing what I know
and knowing
there is much yet
to discover.

Letter From The Closet

out of your letter
comes the mustiness
of where you are

smoke and dampness
rise heavily
from the envelope

i know you now
in a dark place
full of stale existence

how can you tell me
you are happy
and all is well with you

The Severance Line

oh the boat with its endless people
goes forth to drown

goes forth to tip over and spill them
gasping and thrashing down

all the children and fathers and
mothers and friends who cannot swim

look how they dazzle the water
with their startled eyes

and there the boat lies
upside down looking for them

and the water stares quietly back
growing sleepy in the sun

Letter From The Closet
House, Growing Old

he knows the house
knows all its rooms and
what the creakings mean
within the walls

he has been
under the house
crawling around in
the damp earth

helping it brace itself
fixing its water pipes
and looking for
termite danger

a leak slides down
the corner of a room
from the
all night rain

now he is crawling around
in the attic
over the
wiring and insulation

calling: house house
are you all right
is there anything i can
do for you

Revised Center for Hot Buttered Roll
Birthday Poem At Twenty One

you are right
about
she is
faster than
your love for her
her impossible smile
flows down upon
it were a surprise

my child i have sent you my worry
on blank and wrinkled paper

you are a man now
you can release yourself

i will not be the burden you
are strong enough to carry

look for the symbol here
it is a gift for your birthday

i have hidden it in a smile because i
do not know how to tell you what it is

it is not a cigarette or a drink
or a knock at the door

it is something that aches
at the back of my head

i put my hand where it is and
it is no longer yours

do you understand your mother?
her strange love? her thoughts that

stop in the middle?
then good, we will leave it at that,

have a nice life

Lemon Center For Hot Buttered Roll

you are right
about the woman
she is
taller than
your love for her
her impossible smile
flows down upon you as though
it were a sunrise

do not murmur her name
too soon
she does not
know it

she is preparing an
avocado for
your breakfast
you must love it or
she will cry

do not call her anger
she will kill the
spider you have
trained to watch her from
your serious eye

she will grow
fat
when you please her
sing songs for her in
your borrowing voice

she will listen and
write you a poem
and never
read it
to you

California Chablis

Late September Poem

7:40 p.m.

the sun fractures
everything in
still
to go on

i, not beautiful,
not sad,
sit at my table
naked in the morning

another glass
filled this
I don't matter
I'll drink it any
temperature

the windows are cool
and open
no one is looking in

my brothers
are lost in my
their children
these pictures
inside my lids

i might
sit this way forever
looking at the nothing
of the wall

my auntie
my auntie

some of us forgot
we have carried
the same name
and the same
with different
perspectives

i might sit here
till midnight
or till the telephone
or doorbell makes me move

we have sat to-
gether in the
each section
on a train hurrying

i love the contour of
the chair
the wood-feel
beneath my elbows

from Washington
to Dallas
and into unwe-
lcomed houses with hab-

i am not thirsty
or hungry
or lonely

i am
sitting here

-- Joyce Kilmer

San Francisco, CA

of my love

The Newspaper Tells It

-- for John Berryman

poet in icy river

kills self

poet in river kills

icy poet

river in poet

self river

river kills poet

in icy self

kills poet

self poet

icy

kills river

poet

in river

poet kills self

in icy river

-- Joyce Odam

Sacramento, CA

California Chablis

3:40 p.m.
the sun fractures
everything in the head
and still
we do go on

another glass
chilled this time
it doesn't matter --
I'll drink it any
temperature

my brothers
are lost in my mind
their children
draw pictures
inside my lids

aunt annie
aunt annie

none of us forget
we have carried
the same name
and the same memories
with different
perspectives

we have sat to-
gether in the same
coach sections
on a train hurrying
us from washington d.c.
to dallas
and into unwelcome
houses with habits

strange to our ways
we were much alone
always between
arriving or leaving
which parent will
meet us
what soldier to put
his hand
on my thigh
what war
what death
what bells ringing
for the final victory

my brothers and I
remember
we have turned out
very badly

in napa
the ground is good
for growing grapes
and housing insanity
I live very near
for both purposes

all of this
adds up to one not
very exciting record

there has been no
family scandal

everyone is safe

Michael With The Orange Hair

he played a game of hide
& seek

took me five minutes to find
him

he was behind a huge pepper tree
counting the moons
on his fingers

one-two-three on michael
I yelled

he caught fire
while he was imagining the sun

it was the last I saw of
him

I Don't Pay Much Attention
To That Sort Of Thing, Darling

D'Merzunii Saint Gâla
is my first, last & eternal love;
he leads me astray
into wild fields
& makes me lie down
with him;
surely lust & desire
will be after me
all of the hours of my life,
& Hank & Bill & James
& Claude
forever & ever.

And Then He Liked Me But Not Plenty

when will you have me then?

they brought me over from
england and germany carried in two
separate bodies
i got put together in america
on the east coast

mama said i would grow up
and marry some nice young man
who would take care of me

and in the meanwhile
daddy and mama weren't making it
and the young men i got to know
wanted to do nothing but make it

and i married and unmarried
then married again
this time to a not quite so young
man, and he liked me plenty
at first

and then he liked me but not plenty
and then he had this affection
and just got used to me

we raised chickens on a farm
but they were messy so we cut off
their heads and ate them
and we got a girl dog that we had
spayed and drowned the cat's kittens

meanwhile i kept having all of these
sensuous dreams and i would wonder
about things but never found out
or felt very taken

Fat Girls

legs from the knees up
large and soft
ass merging with sky
everywhere
flesh and mountains to move
breasts sagging with
ripeness
blessed twice-over

The Cat That Went A Long Way

the cat went
a long way
(with help)
a very long way

she came back
(unaided)
and we fed her
bite size pieces
of fish and guilt

mew mew
said the cat
smiling at us
rather
victoriously
I thought

The Way To Truth

```
subroutine BH06S (t,ltlas)
dimension T (4)
lt2 equals T (2)
locfi equals 5 plus LT2
1 lochl equals locf1 plus lt2-2
if (lochl - ltlas)11,11,6
11 do 2 K equals locfi, lochl
2 t (K) equals alog (T (k))
locfi equals lochl plus 2
go to 1
6 return
```

end

My Canoe Floats Anyway It Wants

& here I am
floating
on a cool day in April
currents taking me
away from you
the sun
shining down boredom
everything naked
& without terror

(mama
you should see me now
your little girl
a mind half gone)

a caught fish
trying to live
in this canoe
the river
makes all the sounds
of the world
I can hear
anything I want
or nothing at all

I can hear the Pope
eating a banana
I can hear Irish battles
I can hear Africa
planting bodies
I can hear oil
drain from the pipes in Alaska
I can hear a rattlesnake
in Mexico
I can hear the snow falling
in Norway

I can hear
your indifference
darling
and now I wish
to hear
nothing more

The Repetition Of Morning & Death & Six O'Clock

The old dog's neck turns. He watches me.
I am sipping gin
at six o'clock in the morning,
and I have built an early fire
to warm the death in me.
Later on I may
masturbate in the shower.
I have escaped death by fire
and falling planes.
It is another morning for me.
More gin. More fire.
More six o'clocks.

The old dog is sly with me.
I am sure he has written
pornographic books
and signed a fictitious name.
Now he thinks he can escape notice
because he is old. Clever canine.
They will believe him before me.

Later on I will let
the old dog out in the yard.
He will watch cars and people pass by.
He will raise his senses
at a bitch in heat. There will
be a lion-type memory.

Inside, I am turning the clock back.
I am sipping gin
at six o'clock in the morning,
and I have built an early fire
to warm the death in me.

-- Ann Menebroker

Wilton, CA

just you wait

just you wait she said as they
led her from her room
the rent unpaid for eight months

just you wait she said as they
booked her for assaulting a policeman
disturbing the peace and
vagrancy

just you wait she said as they
put her on a bus for another state
with a one-way ticket and
ten dollars

just you wait she said as she
made bombs in her basement
from bottles and cans and old papers

just you wait she said as they
sent her to the detention center
for observation

just you wait she kept saying
to the wrong side of
the one-way mirror

as I watched and listened
her eyes became many eyes
and her voice many voices
and I for one am waiting
uneasily uneasily

Reaffirmation

Again you come to me, filling my room
with explanations of yourself, listening well
to them and agreeing with them all, letting me know
I too am permitted to hear and agree. You move
from chair to chair, touching things as you go,
covering my room, claiming my room, claiming
me.

But I have seen you here before, and learned
to wait and watch in my own way until,
convinced as you soon become that all has been done,
you look around the room as if to wonder
where I am, and then you leave. So, once more,
you have shown to yourself, proved to yourself,
made clear to your world the strength of your
love.

-- William Sayres

New York, NY

breakdown

no matter what type
of weak negative relationship
there will be a decrease
in the other

raw figures are quite
spread about the
two column fields

consequently
it not only
illustrates
a user but
establishes
permissible values

the requested
violation may
have occurred
since the case
in point
shows what
alphanumerics
were encountered

in cookbook format
be prepared to run

pages of output
must use some
discretion for
the user

prejudice seems
to affect levels
attached to the
actual dollar

dividing the
sample would
have caused a loss

parents and children

there are four keywords
namely
there are no keywords

any analysis should
attempt to control
the iterative and
therefore may provide
a program of value

in other instances
inadvertently
it may be a good
idea to substitute

changes may be
entered or terminated
with a slash

any investigation
between a family and
its automobile may
be confounded

income can be masked
with second purchases

help someone to locate
a spurious and
intervening correlation

although none may
appear to exist

-- M. K. Book

Lincoln, NB

with the floor beasts

i'm not honestly contented,
picking only the chicken necks
and leaving the remains,
for the dogs and the roaches.

should i reverse this pattern
and get a look at things
from the floor up:
a stargazer with the floor beasts?
reject the dainty grammarian
on high? yes, i'll punctuate my life
with a wing-bone behind my ear,
preaching of a whimsical planet.

ruck-sack

i have always kept a loaded ruck-sack
in my closet.

no one has ever seen it, nor will they
until i throw it up over a shoulder
and wave goodbye with the other hand.

i'm a gypsy with a mustang, nine
buttondown collar shirts, six hundred books
filled with hokum and humbug, and who
will get it all when i've hit the wind --
naturally, my worst of enemies.

i play a good game.
i've cleansed myself with a slight tint of liberalism,
laugh at revolutionaries and other god makers,
plan to go pipi on the governors spats
if he ever shows up.

i made ready for this trip several months ago
while meditating on the general electric trade mark.
such a mystical configuration the world has never seen.

all my madness is packed in that bag:
Ellison's The Invisible Man, The Rosy Crucifixion
(all three parts), a few letters from
the girl in the pearlescent go-go boots,
a roll of chiffon toilet paper for gaga moments
when a bush will become a cherishable experience.

hello ruck-sack:
hello green twig sizzling, whistling, hissing
in the campfire:
hello rezina, raki, chilly swill of Parkbrau:
hello daughter watchers in train stations:

ruck-sack and i are coming through,
hoping to get our fingers in your ears.

good poetry

I received a dozen poems in the morning mail.
12 masterpieces from a second generation immigrant,
and I didn't want to believe
that so much genuine history could come so consistently.
I tried to take a shower and dismiss it,
tried to smother the flame:
the soap --
slimy on my arms and legs,
running down my neck,
running down between the canyons of my toes,
between my legs and down the silver drain,
between Poland and a speedy train to London,
the soap made it sting --
as if I had his poetry in my eyes.
there were the images of voiceless mothers
in black trunks,
naked Italians on Ellis Island,
an army of irregulars
who would only have made it into print
the day their obituary was drafted by a novice reporter,
was it not for this trafficker in words,
as I've heard it said, who
has sent me to the showers.
good poets are Hitlers of the mind.
while towelling,
I realized that his best poems
were yet to be written.

-- John Kay

Long Beach, CA

flak

when Bob went over to Nam
I figured he was ready
for the killing
he was always talking about
killing anyway
usually it was himself
he wanted to kill
along with former teachers
former employers
& five or six old girl
friends.

an existential hoodlum
a blue eyed con man
he read Plato & Sartre

he read Camus
got into knife fights
in the street
made it with more girls
than the rest of us
dreamed of.

something was on fire
at the core of him
anyone who went near
felt that fire.

in his artillery unit he
smoked a lot of grass
watching the pretty colors
in the sky
smoked a lot of grass &
caught some flak one time
I think that's what you
call it, flak.

his right eye ruined for good
they shipped him home
with some pretty medals
he could only half see.

now we sit in the Wagon Wheel
drinking draft beer &
watching the pretty colors
of a Hamm's Beer sign.

Bob seldom talks about the war
but sometimes when he's drunk
he bitches about gooks & commies
& demonstrators
he bitches about buddhists &
dead buddies.

he talks about making something
of himself
some day.

he never looks at you
when he talks anymore.

the spittoon

my slovak grandfather had this friend
he knew him from the old country
I think
they looked a lot alike
the two friends
& they'd sit in the living room
sit stiffly in stuffed chairs
never looking relaxed
at times they hardly looked alive

sitting like that
their arms & legs straight
a brass spittoon on the floor
between them
this old bowl-like thing
it too from over there
looking odd in the same room
with a new tv
an embarrassment to the relatives
when they visited
they kept trying to make him
get rid of the thing
roundabout ways of course
you couldn't tell that man
to do anything.

the friends always had a warm greeting
they were so glad to see each other
you expected a lot of talk
but they spoke little
a few words in slovak maybe
a gesture with the hands
yet I never saw two men
as comfortable with each other
they KNEW each other
a couple of slovak buddhas
sitting there for hours
smiling
chewing tobacco
spitting into that spittoon
plunking gobs of tobacco-spit
into that old spittoon.

his tail conducts a symphony

when he comes in from outside
& there's a wild look in his eyes
paranoid & alert
insane with awareness
he won't let me touch him
even if he's hungry
my touch a threat
me a threat
everything a threat.

I feed him & 2 hours later
he sleeps in my lap.
his lip is cut
there's blood on his nose
his bushy tail is still
at last, full of leaves
& twigs & dirt.

I can't describe his sound
it's not like the sound
other cats make
it's more like a snore
than a purr
it does something for me
settles my nerves.
even in sleep his ears
are cocked
they rise up like radar
his ears are cocked &
every so often the eyes open
take a quick look around.
the blood on his face tells me
his fears are real.
I wonder about my own.

love is a nice place to visit

you said
in the room where we live
the windows for example
in the morning sun
the cats stretched out
dog fur spotting the
pillars of light
the dog snoring
coffee steaming in our hands
hands that smell
of crotch & toast &
orange juice
with the paper in
our laps
you reading Fred Bassett
me looking at the ads
for skin flicks
98¢ now
wondering if anybody
anywhere can do it
like we do it
love making us think
we alone know
ecstasy.

-- Al Masarik

Alameda, CA

DAYLIGHT SAVING

I came in, and all the timecards were pulled so I had to go into Spindle at personnel and he said, what happened, Bukowski? and I said, hell, all the timecards were pulled, I couldn't punch in, and he said, you're an hour late, and I said, hell, I have 6 p.m. right here on my watch, and he said, it's Daylight Saving today, and I said, o, and he said, how come you didn't know it was Daylight Saving, and I said, well, I don't have a tv and I don't read the newspapers and I only listen to symphony music on the radio, and Spindle turned to the others in the office and he said, look here, Bukowski says he doesn't have a tv and he doesn't read newspapers and he only listens to symphony music on the radio, should I really believe that? and somebody said, o, yes, you better believe it, that cat's crazy, that cat is crazy as they come, and Spindle got out my timecard and handed it to me and said, all right, punch in, you'll be docked for the missing time, and I took my card out to the clock and hit it and then I walked to the work area, all the workers snickering at me and making sly remarks, and I handed my card to supervisor Wilkins in row 88 and I sat down and went to work.

BORN TO LOSE

I was sitting in this cell
and all these guys were tattooed
BORN TO LOSE
BORN TO DIE

all of them were able to roll a cigarette
with one hand

if I mentioned Wallace Stevens or
even Pablo Neruda to them
they'd think me crazy

I named my cellmates in my mind:
that one was Kafka
that one was Dostoevski
that one was Blake
that one was Céline

and that one was
Mickey Spillane

I didn't like Mickey Spillane

sure enough that night at lights out
Mickey and I had a fight over who got
top bunk

the way it ended neither of us got top bunk
we both got the hole

after I got out I made an appointment with the warden
I told him I was a writer
a sensitive and gifted soul
and I wanted to work in the library

he gave me two more days in the hole

when I got out I worked in the shoe factory

I worked with Van Gogh, Schopenhauer, Dante,
Robert Frost and Karl Marx.

they put Spillane in license plates.

-- Charles Bukowski

Los Angeles, CA

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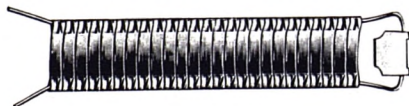
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