

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