

(i called her lebou) hit upon
that same controlling notion back when
the baby brownie was still just a gleam
in george eastman's irises.

oldest of fourteen kids, a practical nurse,
without the benefit of economics courses,
she simply sank her earnings
into kodak stock. even during the depression,

she would generously relieve her grateful relatives
of badly depreciated paper.

she died two years ago at eighty-seven,
worth about two hundred thousand bucks.

(it took me just about a year to blow
the ten grand after taxes left to me -- wives and
kids and friends and girlfriends ... and europe.)
i even donated ten dollars to a little magazine.)

well, anyway, there are important lessons buried here
about america, the little guy, and common sense.
unfortunately i've been overeducated -- it will take
a simpler mind than mine to point them out.

a theresa trilogy

i.

in spite of frequent showerings,
she always smells of hamburger.
fortunately i love ground meat, and i
love my little short order cook.

i would like to smother her
in ketchup onions mustard pickle
garlic melted cheese ortega chilis.
i think she might stick to my ribs.

ii.

her grandfather had a bad heart
so her grandmother harped upon the uncut grass
until he dragged his ass outside, yanked the
power mower alive, and died.

at the funeral she was furious.
she said it was just like him
to die first and leave her with
the burial expenses.

iii.

a native californian, theresa
assures me she would love the midwest.
she says it's healthier there
and the people are happier there.

i tell her that the colorado
and the hudson rivers form
the borders of a continental loony-bin,
but she insists they're very happy there,

even her okie uncle
who sent his labrador retriever
away for four years at
a university for bird-dogs.

happy hour

i like to call my girl at five on thursdays
when she gets home from work
and meet her for the happy hour
at seaport village on the marina in seal beach.

our first stop is the steak house
for cut-rate harvey wallbangers, a primary
source of vitamin c. then, at the jolly roger,
double gin-and-tonics for a buck, and each half-hour

they roll out a steaming buffet
of chicken, shrimp, and cheeses.
later we wash down enchiladas at hungry jose's
with a couple of volcanic margaritas.

it's a pleasant ritual,
reminiscent of the free lunches of the depression,
and of cheap pub fare, but infinitely more edible
than many a sheepdip pie.

meanwhile the sailboats glide as wistfully
as forfeited ambitions,
and the waitresses move in-and-out
of onanistic half-worlds.

my students scorn the seaport village
as a capitalistic scheme, which it is,
and as an apotheosis of plastic,
which of course it is ...

but was there any chance it would remain
a stolid carapace for indigent fishermen,