

but i may have to revise my theory,  
because, sure enough, this fall  
my high school acne did return.

i'm not exaggerating when i say  
i just about had a nervous breakdown,  
it wasn't just the physical embarrassment;  
there was also the rush of buried humiliations  
unleashed by the immediately re-familiar facial itch.

when i asked the dermatologist  
what was causing the pustules,  
he said, predictably enough, "acne."

"yes," i said, "i know that,  
but what is the cause, after all these years,  
of the acne?"

"most likely, strain," he said, "emotional upset,"  
and he rushed from the room.

i didn't bother to point out to him  
that circumstances and myself have always kept me  
more or less under strain.  
obviously "strain" is the new etiological smokescreen,  
just as when i was a kid  
it was chocolate or french fries.

well, while the acne lasted,  
i was under considerable strain,  
but, amazingly, the tetracycline worked,  
proving that dermatological science is progressing  
in its knowledge of cures, if not of causes.

a patch of blue scars, however,  
though not overly distinguishable to the untrained eye,  
does remain.

i suppose bukowski will accuse me now  
of deliberately setting out to look like him.

## TWO FOR THE SEESAW AND ONE FOR THE ROAD

If I'm over visiting my kids and want  
something from the liquor store,  
it's about fifty-fifty whether I'll go get it myself  
or whether I'll ask my wife to run over for me,  
except that as the evening gets later  
and I get more mellow and settled in  
the odds improve to about 10-1 that I'll send my wife.

This outrages many of her women friends  
and I've even seen a trace of concern  
flicker about the eyes of a couple of my own friends,

but all it comes down to  
is that she's willing to do this little thing for me  
just as I am willing to do many little things for her  
and just as, I'm pretty sure, if the chips were down  
we'd be willing to do big things for each other also.

Now if, as I have seen happening,  
her more militant friends succeed in convincing her  
that there is something demeaning in her  
running these errands for me,

will this truly be a "liberation,"  
the "raising of a consciousness"

or just another sacrifice of the amenities to orthodoxy.

#### DOUBLE TAKE

I was coming out of the English office today,  
when a student stopped me and asked,

"Are you the department chairman?"

He couldn't understand why everyone within hearing  
distance  
broke into guffaws.

#### A PERENNIAL

It was the Five-Thousandth Showing  
of the "Big Sleep,"

and Bogie was saying, "My, my, my,  
how many guns there are around town these days ...  
and so few brains."

And afterwards, on the News,  
Police Chief Davis  
was urging the citizenry to arm themselves.