

once-used things,
as they used me once.

I should at least wear my green and white
pajamas tonight when I go to bed
alone. my thick wooden cane I suppose was
once needed.

A FACT

Antony's wife cut out Cicero's tongue.
Charles Starkweather went to the electric chair
on June 25, 1959. it took him 4 minutes to die.
Charlotte Corday was 25 on June 13, 1793 when she
pulled the plug on Jean-Paul Marat.

remember: declaration of personal bankruptcy remains
on your credit record for 14 years.
male silkworm moths can detect a female moth
6 and 1/2 miles away.
flying fish can stay airborne for 1,000 feet.
the land crabs of Cuba can run faster than a horse.
whales weighing 195 tons and mice weighing 3 ounces
develop from the same size egg.
Cleopatra never washed the dishes.

this is what happens when you sit down to
write a poem and you can't write one.

OVERT POPULATION

I'll say one thing: her older sister wrote
more novels than anybody I ever knew but
the novels kept coming back. I read some
of them, or rather -- parts of them. maybe
they were good, I didn't know, I wasn't a
critic: I didn't like Tolstoy or Thomas
Mann or Henry James.
anyhow, her novels kept coming back and
her men kept leaving, and she just ate more,
had more babies; she didn't bathe and seldom
combed her hair and she let the diapers lay
about stinking. and she talked continually
and laughed continually -- a highly nervous and
slicing laugh -- she talked about men and sex

continually and I never criticized her because I sensed she had enough trouble and I was living with her younger sister, besides.

but one afternoon when we were visiting, the older sister said to me: "all right, I know you've had some novels published but I have these babies, these children, that's an art, that's my art!"

"many people have babies," I said, "that's really not exceptional, it's rather standard. but to write a good novel is a rare and an exceptional thing."

she leaped up and waved her arms: "oh yeah. oh yeah? what about your daughter? where is your daughter now?"

"Santa Monica, California."

"SANTA MONICA? WHAT THE HELL KIND OF FATHER ARE YOU?"

I no longer see either sister, although about 2 months ago the younger one phoned long distance and among other things she told me that her sister had just mailed her latest novel off to New York and that her sister thought it was very good, that it was the one, that is was the one that would do it.

I didn't tell her younger sister that all of us novelists think that and that is why there are so many of us.

THE BEACH BOYS

only the young are at the beach.
I have a good body for my age
little bull neck and chest
and powerful legs.
but my back is badly scarred
from a former malady.
I feel some shame for my deformities
and I would not be there
only my woman insists