

What are twenty yards of cloth
and a few boards worth?
But I can't make a couch,
and we have no place for friends to sit.
Elaine and I have fought for months
without guests.
Eddie asks, "You checked out the mall?
We beat Dayton's. Hundred bucks.
Same stuff exactly."
He's right, but I can see
he isn't happy.
He wishes he had a department store
so he could put his furniture
in delicate make-believe rooms
instead of shabby rows.
Besides, the nice stores make better dough.
Is it his fault
he's Crazy Bargaining Eddie?
He sits with me on an overstuffed green divan.
He knows I want to buy and get out.
But Elaine balks. These couches aren't right.
She has dreamed of having one
since she was a girl.
They mean something
I can't understand.
"We've looked long enough," I say.
Crazy Bargaining Eddie averts his eyes
while Elaine agrees.

REMEMBERING THE TIDY TOWN LAUNDROMAT

Machinery has driven us bozo, that's clear.
Why else would every house in this neighborhood
have a washer-drier used just four hours a week?
We all look normal enough, in our clean outfits,
but we've lost the guts to wash together.
I remember my old laundromat in Palo Alto.
It was easy enough, I tell you,
to learn not to put your hand
in the SpeedQueen with the spastic agitator.
Where else would I have met
the nice old lady
whose T-shirt read, "Sit on it!"
Where else would I have learned
the correct response to, "Cochino,
deme todo su dinero, pronto!"
And where else would I have become friends
with the man with half a face.
No more reaching under my chair
to find a petrified village of chewing-gum.

No more notices of spaniels missing.
Goodby to the co-eds washing their underwear.
Wrongly have I cut myself off
from the dangerous and the grotesque
and the merely sexual.
Everybody where I live now
is too proper, I say.
Why can't we share our machines?

-- Hunt Hawkins

Tallahassee FL

PARKED

sitting in my car
on Catalina Avenue in Redondo Beach
I see a fellow of 19 or 20
riding his bicycle upon the sidewalk.
he wears sandals and blue shorts,
slows down, stops, puts one foot down,
sits upon his bicycle seat.
it is 4:30 in the afternoon and
he is tanned a deep and even tan,
his yellow hair and mustache.
his face is smooth
unmarked by pain or experience.
then something animates him
and he pedals off.
another crosses the street,
he must be 21,
very large of chest, blond,
blue-eyed, very tanned, wearing
green shorts and sandals.
it is a Tuesday afternoon.
he stands a moment
looking down the street.
his face is the same as the
other face:
untried, without purpose.
a long cigarette is in his mouth.
he finally enters a liquor store,
comes out a moment later
holding a can of Bubble-Up.

these are the kind my parents wanted
me to be
the kind my country wanted me to
be